

"When I became convinced that  
natural—that all the ghosts and  
there entered into my brain, in  
every drop of my blood, the  
the joy of freedom. \* \* \* For  
I was free. \* \* \* I stood ere  
joyously, faced all worlds.

"And then my heart was filled with  
thankfulness, and went out in love  
the thinkers who gave their lives  
hand and brain \* \* \* And to  
grasp the torch that they had  
high, that light might conquer darkness.

# INGERS

A

BIOGRAPHICAL APPRI

BY

HERMAN E. KITTRE

*"And so I lay this little  
upon this great man's tomb."*



72  
I 47 h

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BY  
THE DRESDEN PUB  

---

ENTERED AT STATIONERS

TO  
LILLIAN R. KITTREDD  
**My Wife,**  
WHOSE SELF-DENYING DEVOT  
TO THE AUTHOR  
HAS MADE POSSIBLE THIS "APPRE  
OF ONE  
WHOSE DEVOTION EMBRACED M



## FOREWORD OF THE

**T**O Mrs. Eva A. Ingersoll (widow of Colonel Ingersoll), Mrs. Eva R. Ingersoll (daughter of Colonel Ingersoll), Clinton Pinckney Farrell (brother-in-law of Colonel Ingersoll), who have furnished biographical and illustrative material, and who have furnished the necessary data derived from other sources; to Lalla B. Ingersoll (widow of Mr. John Ingersoll, nephew of Colonel Ingersoll), for the loan of letters and photographs; to Mrs. Mary Logan (widow of General John A. Logan), for her recollections of Colonel Ingersoll; to John Ingersoll, in Marion, Ill., for his recollections of Ingersoll's early life and associations in Shawneetown, and Peoria; to Miss Ward (author of *The History of the Tabernacle Church*), who has helped

## FOREWORD OF THANKS

and for other personal reminiscences of a long friend; to the late Mr. E. J. Donald, editor of *The Truth Seeker*, for excerpts from *Ingersoll As He Is*, for excerpts from publications; to Mr. W. A. Kelsoe, of the *Post-Dispatch*, who has collected material concerning Colonel Ingersoll's youth, and his father, in Greenville, Ill.; to R. McKee, pastor of the Congregational Church in Moreland, N. Y., for extracts from the records of that church, relative to the services of Colonel Ingersoll's father; to Mr. Charles Carroll, of Shawneetown, for recollections of Colonel Ingersoll's life at that place, and in Greenville, Mo., and Marion; to the Adjutant-General of the War, who has supplied, from the files of his office, details of Colonel Ingersoll's military career, which could not be obtained from the publication of the *Official Records of the Confederate Armies*, nor elsewhere; to General Thomas W. Scott, adjutant-general of Illinois, who has generously loaned his collection of military records.

## FOREWORD OF THANKS

ident, and narrative that has been a constant aid in the purely biographical pages of this work.

As to the other pages,—those of critical “study” and “appreciation,”—I am happily able to realize that which Huxley regarded as “the most sacred act of a man’s life,” namely, “to say and to feel what I believe such and such to be true.’ ”

HERMAN E. KITTREDGE

WASHINGTON, D. C., May, 1910.



# CONTENTS

---

## CHAPTER I.

FROM EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN FORTY,

## CHAPTER II.

FROM EIGHTEEN FORTY-ONE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-  
SEVEN, . . . . .

## CHAPTER III.

FROM EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN SIXTY-  
SIX, . . . . .

## CHAPTER IV.



## *CONTENTS*

### CHAPTER VI.

FROM EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTEEN  
EIGHT, . . . . .

### CHAPTER VII.

FROM EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO EIGHTEEN  
TY-TWO, . . . . .

### CHAPTER VIII.

FROM EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN  
NINETY-SIX, . . . . .

### CHAPTER IX.

FROM EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO EIGHTEEN  
NINETY-NINE, . . . . .

### CHAPTER X.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION UPON  
HE STOOD, . . . . .

### CHAPTER XI

## CONTENTS

### CHAPTER XIII.

WAS HE 'A MERE ICONOCLAST'?

(*continued*)

Were His Teachings Inimical to Law and Morality? . . . 3

### CHAPTER XIV.

WAS HE 'A MERE ICONOCLAST'?

(*concluded*)

Did He Endeavor To Destroy the Hope of Immortality? 3

### CHAPTER XV.

HIS DOMESTIC TEACHINGS.

Woman, Love, Marriage, Home, . . . . . 3

### CHAPTER XVI.

HIS DOMESTIC TEACHINGS.

(*concluded*)

Children—Their Rearing and Education, . . . . 4

## *CONTENTS*

### CHAPTER XIX.

UNIVERSAL REGRET AT HIS DEATH—A SUMMARY  
HIS LIFE-WORK IN (1) POLITICS, (2) THE L  
(3) THE FIELD OF RATIONALISM—HIS  
FLUENCE ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHT, . . .

ALPHABETICAL INDEX, . . . . .

## ILLUSTRATIONS

---

INGERSOLL IN 1890 (ÆT. 57), . . . . *Fr*

From a photograph by Sarony

BIRTHPLACE OF INGERSOLL, DRESDEN,  
N. Y., . . . . . *fa*

From a painting by James Verrier, after a  
photograph

REV. JOHN INGERSOLL, . . . . .

From a painting by Henry Ulke, after a da-  
guerreotype

INGERSOLL IN 1861 (ÆT. 28) AS COLONEL,  
ELEVENTH ILLINOIS CAVALRY VOL-  
UNTEERS, . . . . .

Enlargement from a daguerreotype

INGERSOLL IN 1884 (ÆT. 51), . . . . .

From a photograph by Taber, San Francisco

## *ILLUSTRATIONS*

FACSIMILE OF A LETTER FROM INGER-  
SOLL TO THE AUTHOR, . . . . .

INGERSOLL IN 1877 (ÆT. 44), . . . . .

From a photograph by Bradley and Rulopson,  
San Francisco

INGERSOLL IN 1877 (ÆT. 44), . . . . .

From a photograph by Houseworth, San Fran-  
cisco

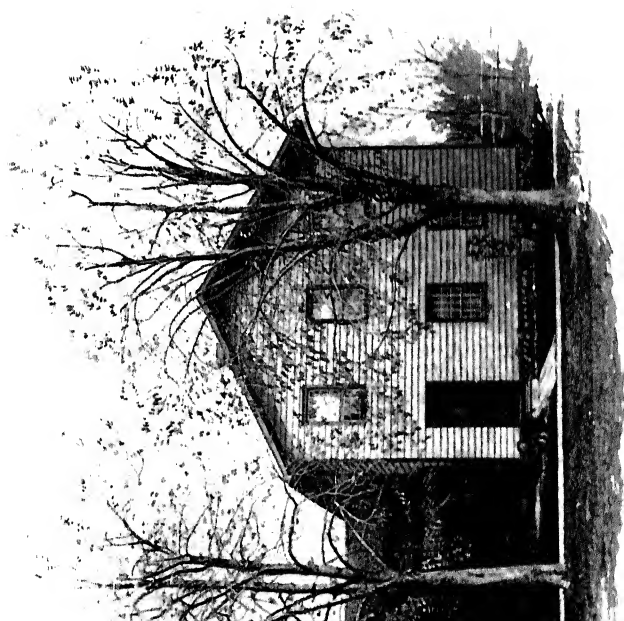
## CHAPTER I.

### *FROM EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN FORTY*

ENGLAND has her Stratford, Scotland has her Alloway, and America, too, has her Dresden. For there, on August 11, 1832, was born the greatest and noblest of the Western World; an immense personality,—unique, lovable, sublime; the peerless orator of all time, and as true a poet as Nature ever held in tender clasp upon her loving breast, and, in words coined for the chosen few, told of the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears of universal life; a patriot whose golden words and deathless deeds were worthy the Great Republic; a philanthropist, real and genuine; a philosopher whose central theme was human love,—who placed “the holy hearth

lies a tranquil village on the v  
Seneca Lake. Passing over its  
would take us back to the stirring  
and Tory,—to “old, unhappy fan  
battles long ago,”—we may note th  
typical of the hundreds which have  
from the modest wants and nece  
New York and New England.

In this handful of buildings with  
there is little to recall the splendor  
city. No palace “of rare and na  
tells of imperial grandeur; and i  
gallery has any master left his we  
finest street would never remind o  
or the Prager; and through its mic  
dreamful of the sea. Indeed, th  
either within or around, which  
oblivious of its name to associat  
the American lake with the Dresden  
river, nor to suspect that it was ent  
place in the memory of mankind  
its embellishments, its environme  
marshes etc. suggest the origin







## EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY

teen with its tears "the banks and braes o' bonny  
oon"; as in the "woods of Kentucky" no ce  
ry-storied rock reveals the secret of him w  
roke the shackles of a race and preserved t  
ublime unity of a nation: so at Dresden,—th  
eriest misnomer,—there is naught to account f  
m who possessed at once the language of Shak  
peare, the tenderness of Burns, the justice an  
wisdom of Lincoln—the genius, the goodness, th  
eroism, to strike the mental manacles fro  
illions of his fellows and create an epoch  
tellectual progress.

### § 2.

Ingersoll himself has said, that "great men ha  
een belittled by biography." He might have adde  
at great biographies have been belittled by gene  
ogy. Why? Because, in the present state  
nowledge, the utmost possibility of genealog  
amely, the establishment of heredity, is irreleva  
a biography, the story of a life. Primarily, bio  
graphy deals with the *what* and the *how*. T

heredity. If we are to demonstrate the —the ultimate cause,—of his genius, we show why she was as she was. It will say that he was metaphysical because Scotch, nor that he was witty because Irish. Maybe the Scotch are sometimes So the question still is, *Why* was she ical? or *Why* was she witty? And unable to answer such questions, our de genealogy cannot rise in importance above mere curiosity.

Why is it, that, while a vast majority kind merely vegetate,—manifest only mental power as is requisite to prove gratification of their physical appet occurs, once in a few hundred years, s bination of the elements as to produce speare, a Burns, a Lincoln, or an Ingers do not know; and if we could demonstrate ancestors of such men are invariably should still be in darkness. In the vaults of being, nature has locked the genius, and into the Styx of human ign

## *EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

about forty-nine and one-half ounces; that, usual brain weighing from twenty-three to thirty-four ounces belongs to a very inferior person; that a brain weighing less than twenty-three ounces belongs to an idiot; and that, usually, a brain weighing sixty-five ounces or more belongs either to a very wise man or to a fool. Perhaps we may be somewhat more definite and say, that, between the two extremes of normality (thirty-four ounces and sixty-five ounces), the manifestations of brain depend upon its form, the number and the depth of its convolutions and sulci, and, probably, above all, upon its chemical composition. But the physicochemical constitution that is essential to any particular form or degree of genius, or, indeed, to mediocrity, is unknown.

There is cause to believe, that an exact knowledge of the latter will some day be acquired and reduced to intelligible terms. Then, may genealogy reasonably occupy a conspicuous place in biography. Meantime, it seems that, in telling the story of a life, we should concern ourselves chiefly

for one mystery by another." This indifference to genealogy when he said he knew as much of his ancestors as they and it is in harmony with the following from his lecture on Shakespeare:—

"It has been said that a man of genius should select his ancestry with great care—and yet there does not seem to be as much care as most people think. The children of the great are born in palaces, while over the children of the poor is a roof of straw. Most of the great are like mountains, with the elevation of their ancestors on one side and the depression of posterity on the other. (iii 7)<sup>1</sup>

"We account for this man as we do for the highest mountain, the greatest river, the most perfect gem. We can only account for it. (iii 17)

### § 3.

But while the several reasons indicated by the quotations and the paragraph preceding may be accepted as the basis of his belief in the futility of endeavoring, in the traditional way, to discover the secret of genius in general, and of Shakespeare in particular, they afford no explanation of his lack of interest in a personal history, nor of his decided aversion to autobiography.

*EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

pleasure born of the assurance of perfect intimacy and candor, and authenticity, the most instructive and inspiring of stories. But such explanation is by no means hard to find. Indeed, it is instantly apparent to all who are familiar with the personality of Ingersoll. It stands out, with a clearness that almost transcends modesty itself, in that inherent modesty of true greatness which was his, and in his serene, abiding content to be known through his works alone. We need no stronger proof of the man is contained in his invariable oral reply, "No biography," to writers, who frequently besought him for personal data, and in a private letter answering a communication in which the present author had inclosed, for authorization, the manuscript of an article of a biographical and complementary nature. Aside from the contents of the letter itself, from which I quote, its date, August 19, 1898, clearly indicates how great was its writer's difference to biography and contemporary praise. The author's communication, written in the early morning, evidently not having awakened sufficient

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRA

"I have never given to any one a sketch of my life. my idea a life should not be written until it has been li

### § 4.

As perhaps a majority of geniuses b  
families of more than two children were  
oldest or the youngest of those families  
may not be interesting to note that  
Ingersoll was the youngest of five,—  
and three brothers; but it certainly is  
and amusing as well, that fate, with wo  
should decree that his father was to be a  
preacher, and that a part of his own na  
be borrowed from another preacher,—L  
Green.

Rev. John Ingersoll, upon whom  
stowed by far the greater of these h  
greatest that was ever bestowed upon a  
—was born at Pittsford, Rutland Cou.  
July 5, 1792, his parents being Eb  
Margaret (Whitcomb) Ingersoll, both  
descent. He graduated from Middleb  
(then and still non-denominational), M  
Vt. with the degree of bachelor of a

## *EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

studied theology with Rev. Josiah Hopkins, D. New Haven, Vt., he was ordained a Congregational preacher, in 1823, and was pastor of the Congregational Church at Pittsford from that year until 1826.

In addition to the education and culture ordinarily implied by the regular collegiate and to private theological studies above indicated, R. John Ingersoll possessed superior native endowments, and was most proficient in Hebrew, and the Greek and the Latin classics. Moreover, he was an extensive reader,—withal a man of wide and profound learning.

However, that he was, in the beginning of his ministerial career, as absolutely orthodox, in spite of all his learning, as Jonathan Edwards, for example, had been in spite of his, is certain. That he was intellectually hospitable in his later years is equally certain. "He was grand enough," writes Robert, "to say to me, that I had the same right to my opinion that he had to his. He was great enough to tell me to read the Bible for myself to be honest with myself."



a place in the mind of an intelligent man; that he believed in the infamous dogma of eternal fire; that with abhorrence many passages in the Bible were interpreted; that he believed man, in a state of sin, would have the eternal opportunity of repentance; and that the pity of God would last as long as the suffering of man." (v 149). Even more striking is the fact that, on his death-bed, he requested Robert to read to him, not the Bible, nor the Christian Scriptures, but passages relating to immortality.

It has been widely stated, and perhaps widely believed, that Rev. Mr. Ingersoll was a tyrannical, particularly in his domestic life, and that it was this circumstance which led his gifted son to rebel against the father. At this point, I quote, as far as pertinent, from Robert to a friend:—

"The story that the unkindness of my father towards me is simply an orthodox lie. The bigots, using the Bible as a text, are endeavoring to dig open the graves of the dead. This they are willing to do in defense of their dogmas. \* \* \* My father was a kind and loving man. He loved his children tenderly and intensely. There was no sacrifice which he did not gladly make for them. He loved

## *EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

And elsewhere:—

"He was a good, a brave and honest man. I loved him living, I love him dead. I never said to him an unkind word, and in my heart there never was of him an unkind thought." (v 148)

However, it is admitted that, with all his excellent qualities, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll, like many other parents of his generation, was unduly exacting; that he adhered too literally to the biblical injunction concerning rod and child. There is good evidence that this attitude, doubtless always unjustifiable, was particularly so in the case of Robert. That the youngster in whose maturity found a sense of humor and a command of wit and raillery which would have obliged the Reverend Ingersoll himself to laugh at the Mosaic cosmology (even while he proclaimed its divinity) was aglow with life, and given to fun and prank there is no doubt. But there certainly was nothing wanton or perverse in Robert Ingersoll the boy. There were the same good heart and the same great candor with which Robert Ingersoll

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRE*

Robert would enter a demurrer; but man's faith in his informants was strong, for a time at least, to bring the rod into immediate requisition. After would discover that Robert had told the just as many another clergyman has covered. The effect of these chastise anything but good. With most boys perhaps, have been at least indifferent mere thought that an own parent could with physical suffering, whether or not, parlance, he "deserved" it, was itself punishment than should have been in the uncommonly sensitive and affection of Robert Ingersoll. Nevertheless, the man's parental love (no doubt reciprocal rest of his children also) was, as already returned in generous measure by Robert when, on Sunday May 1, 1859, at F Mr. Ingersoll breathed his last, at the another son, it was in the arms of the "Great Agnostic."

Robert G. Ingersoll's mother, Mary

## *EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

of the signers of the Declaration, and Robert Livingston, who was one of the committee of five appointed to draft that document, and who, as chancellor of the State of New York, administered the oath to Washington as the first president of the United States.

If Robert G. Ingersoll resembled any of his ancestors, either direct or collateral, it was Edward Livingston, the jurist, statesman, and philanthropist. At any rate, it is interesting to note, on this late day, the opinion of one who was competent to pass judgment on such a matter, and who had observed both Livingston and Ingersoll. John Church Hamilton, the biographer and historian (a son of Alexander Hamilton), once came upon the platform, at the conclusion of a lecture by Ingersoll, and, in the course of the ensuing conversation, assured the latter of the resemblance just mentioned. At this the orator was by no means displeased, since the ancestor referred to was one (and the only Livingston) for whom he entertained high admiration. He was always inclined

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPR*

For it is said that her intellect was of a high order, her sympathies were wide and profound, her love of liberty was intense. Of the latter there is ample evidence in the fact that, shortly after the birth of Robert, she prepared and circulated in the state of New York, a petition to the Legislature, praying that slavery in the District of Columbia be abolished. It is claimed that this petition was the first of its kind to be presented in America by a woman.

We are therefore inclined, after all, to think that her fate was not, as we supposed, the sole result of the decision that the middle name of her child-making babe should begin with "Green." Beriah Green was an "uncompromising abolitionist." But whether our supposition is correct or not, we do know that fate soon proved as inexorably cruel in this case as she was ironical in it, or in any other; for Mary Ingersoll, at Cazenovia, Madison County, New York, December 2, 1835,—scarcely more than a year after the decision mentioned,—passed away under a great shadow, not with the proud men-

*EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

§ 5.

After the death of the wife and mother, the life of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll and family was destined to run, as indeed it had already run,—even before the birth of Robert,—a shifting and precarious course. For, orthodox though this clergyman was, especially in his earlier days,—heartily though he favored mental slavery,—he was as strongly opposed to physical slavery as were even his wife and Rev. Beriah Green; and as he had the courage of his convictions," he was continually at odds with the pro-slavery element of the church. Furthermore, he was, by native aptitude and acquired reputation, an evangelist. Under those conditions, it was of course inevitable that his "calls" should be many and near at hand.

In endeavoring to trace the resulting career, one is only too often reminded of the statement of Robert, that 'history, for the most part, is a detailed account of things that never occurred.' And one is finally forced to ask: If so little can be

## *INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRE*

How much of it consists, indeed, of account of things that never occurred. But in the case of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll is very meager "account" of any however, is easily explained. The Congregational denomination, of which he was a member, had fewer organizations than the Presbyterian (especially in rural communities); and, consequently, he was often obliged to accept "calls" less temporary, from Presbyterian churches. Services incident to such calls, being performed by one who had not been regularly ordained into the presbyteries concerned, were not recorded by the latter, nor in the minutes of the general assemblies. If the local churches or societies, themselves kept any written records, such records have been, in many cases, destroyed by fire, mislaid, or otherwise rendered inaccessible. The same is true of the Congregational churches or societies, that he served, whether as pastor, or temporarily as evangelist. In spite of these difficulties, however, we shall attempt to give, by means of the following outline, a preliminary sketch of his life.

## *EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

spring of 1833, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll was pastor of the Congregational church at Hanover, then in the town of Marshall, now in the town of Deansboro, Oneida County, N. Y. There, in a house (and room) still pointed out, was born, on December 11, 1831, his second son, Ebenezer Clark ("Ebon" Clark," as he was familiarly called), who became a Republican representative in Congress, from Illinois, in 1864, succeeding Owen Lovejoy, deceased, and being thrice reëlected.

From Hanover Rev. Mr. Ingersoll removed to Pompey, in Onondaga County. Remaining only a month or so, he was called to what is now Dresden, Torrey Township, Yates County, where on August 11th, as already stated, Robert first saw the light. The village was then known as West Dresden. There the father was pastor of the Presbyterian Church; also of the Presbyterian Church at Bellona, both West Dresden and Bellona then being in the same town, Benton.

After a stay of scarcely six months, or about three months subsequent to Robert's birth, the clergyman again obeyed the familiar summons



*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL*

tion, the former was on a voyage to the Mediterranean, for his health. This meeting was organized on Tuesday February 12, 1832, with forty-one members, mostly from the First Free (Presbyterian) Church. Its first place of worship, Broadway Tabernacle, Canal Street. It soon leased and obtained for exclusive use, at a subscribed sum of \$10,000, the Chatham Street Tabernacle. On April 23, 1832, was dedicated as the Chatham Chapel ("Chatham Chapel"). It was here that Robert G. Ingersoll was baptized, probably in 1834. Six years later the First Free (Presbyterian) Church had removed to the present Broadway Tabernacle Church. Rev. Mr. Finney returned to New York and resumed his duties late in October, 1834, in November, 1834; but Rev. Mr. Finney continued as associate pastor, or part pastor, until February 4, 1835, when he resigned.

To what place he removed cannot be stated; but he probably went directly to Madison County, where, in the

## *EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

especially for a free pew, and for a free platform for any one who desired to speak on moral questions. It advocated temperance and the abolition of slavery.

From Cazenovia, in February, 1836, Rev. J. Ingersoll was again called to Oneida County, to perform special evangelistic service with the Congregational church at Hampton (now Westmoreland). While a revival was in progress, the regular pastor withdrew, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll remaining "stated supply," from March, 1836, until March, 1838.

In the following year, he was preaching to Presbyterians of Belleville, in Jefferson County.

He had moved again by 1840, being a resident of Oberlin, O. He does not seem to have been regularly connected with any church, but to have preached occasionally in Oberlin and adjacent places.

From Oberlin he removed, in 1841, to Ashland, succeeding Rev. Robert H. Conklin as pastor of the Presbyterian Church, and supplying the pulpit at Saybrook. The house which he oc-

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APP.*

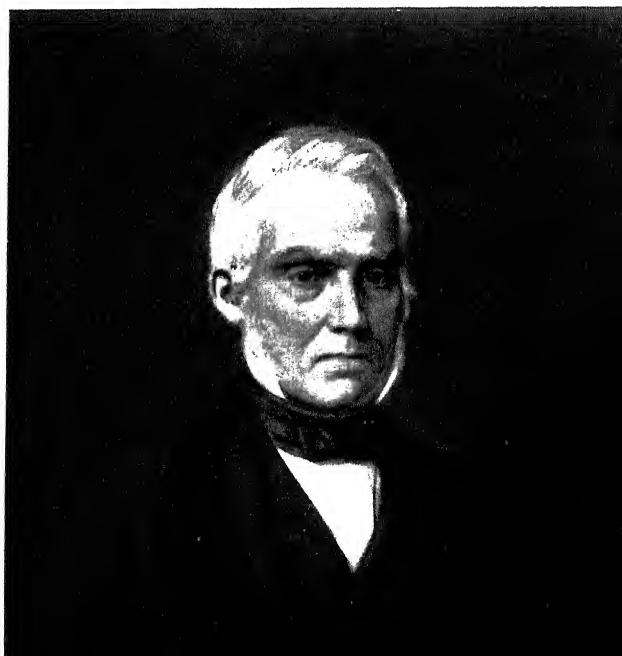
After a residence of about one year in Cuba, Rev. Mr. Ingersoll removed to Madison, to become pastor of what was then the First Congregational Church, which was organized in 1819, and which was called the "First" because it was the first in the township to possess a bell. Having served "about a year more," at a salary of two hundred dollars, he transferred his pulpit elsewhere, to Illinois.

In 1851 he went to Greenville, in Madison County, as pastor ("stated supply") of the Congregational Church, remaining about a year.

From Greenville he removed to Madison County, where, during 1853 and 1854, he was pastor ("stated supply") of the Congregational Church, preaching also at Mount Vernon, Benton.

In 1855, four years before his death, he was residing at Belleville, St. Clair County, in charge of the charge.

During his ministerial career, he preached in Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, and Kentucky.





## *EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

father of Robert G. Ingersoll was his facial resemblance to one who, in most things, was doubtless his exact opposite. Call to the mind's eye a characteristic portrait of Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, and extinguish the spark of humor with the "seriousness" of joy, weight down the curves with "formal coordination," and you have a close likeness of Robert G. Ingersoll. That the latter, however, would have consented to be seen through the features of another, no matter how distinguished, is quite unthinkable. Indeed, carefully weighing the preceding personal history and the testimony of relatives, friends, hosts, and converts who came in close relations with him, we are able to synthesize a very distinct individuality. That he was an individuality—that you would have had to count him as a separate and sovereign unit in taking census of the universe—there is no doubt. He was always himself—dignified, reticent, austere. People,—young people in particular,—“looked up to “Doctor” Ingersoll. He was regarded as a learned man. Exceedingly pious and devout, e

abolition-leaders and clergymen of another sentiment were subjected to mob-violence, he never dampen his ardor nor bridle his tongue. He never allow anything derogatory of the man to be uttered in his presence.

He was a man with strong convictions, and he spoke them fearlessly, whether as a citizen, or as pastor.

As a preacher, he was earnest, eloquent, and expressive. Many whom he converted, he converted so until they heard his son; then they paid him substantially the following tribute to the father and son both: "Your father *gave* me religion, but you have taken it away." Surviving members of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll's congregations testified to his "restlessness" in the pulpit, or rather his restlessness around it; for often, in hermeneutic discourse, he would leave the pulpit, stepping down into the aisle, pacing alternately to the right and the left, and sometimes even walking down an aisle. Then he would suddenly pause and "look at you."

At Hanover (Deansboro), N. Y., he e-

## *EIGHTEEN THIRTY-THREE TO FORTY*

in all the way back. He made salvation seem so plain, so easy, I wanted to take it to my heart without delay." He is also said to have possessed great physical endurance, sometimes preaching from morning until nearly sunset, with only brief intermission.

The records of the Congregational Church at Westmoreland, N. Y., fortunately afford what probably may be safely accepted as a view of his average ministerial work and environment. After stating forth that he came to the church as an evangelist, and that while his meetings were in progress the regular pastor withdrew, the records continue:—

The meetings were in no way interrupted, Mr. Ingersoll assuming full control; and on the 26th of the same month (February) there were added to the church, on profession of faith, about thirty members. At the same time, new and considerably modified articles of faith were adopted. Mr. Ingersoll continued to occupy the pulpit as stated evangelist. He was an able and attractive preacher, his audience never flagging on account of long sermons, to which he was not a little liable. His forte was doubtless as an evangelist. Few men can read clearer or with the accuracy that he did. \* \* \* It was during his ministry that the church was called upon to meet the widespread craze of per-



## *INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION*

respect, was far ahead of his time—that, even in the early forties, he was an occasional exemplar of what is now termed “muscular Christianity.” While residing at North Madison, O., knowledge of his earlier feats as a wrestler became current. A mile or so from the place lived a notorious wrestler weighing about two hundred and twenty-five pounds. One day, by a mischievous prearrangement of the village boys, the two men met and, after some talk, engaged in a wrestling bout. The clergyman was victorious! The saints were scandalized; they demanded an apology from their pastor. On the following Sunday he complied, in substantially these words: “Dear friends, I was tempted to wrestle this man, which was not becoming in a minister; but I threw him in less than a minute.” This closed the incident.

The physical prowess of Rev. Mr. Ingersoll was doubtless reflected in the heroic presence of his youngest son.

## CHAPTER II.

### *FROM EIGHTEEN FORTY-ONE TO EIGHTEEN FIFTY-SEVEN*

OF HIS boyhood, Ingersoll seldom spoke: it was a subject too reminiscent of struggle and hardship,—of unutterable sorrow. The story of a man necessarily involves, to some extent, the story of a boy; and the right to peruse the story of the man here concerned was long since included among those rights inalienable to the human race.

It is in Ashtabula, as a town of scarcely a thousand souls, in the old Western Reserve, that we find the first definite impressions of the "mischievous" boy who was so human that people loved him, then and ever after, upon calling him by his half of his first name, sometimes making

catechist nor a preacher is ubiquitous. In this village, we hear of sundry doings, here by a youngster whose face is not all white, whose shoes (when he wears any) do not usually "shine"—of leap-frog in the dust of the circus-ring—of miscellaneous issuing from the old tannery—of going off where they shouldn't.

Be it noted, however, that, "what 'Bob' might be up to, there was never guile in it." Thus commented the afore-said catechist, Mr. Robertson, in later life, at the best of first-hand knowledge; for, aside from being the boy's Sunday-school teacher, and a member in Rev. Mr. Ingersoll's church, he knew where Robert, in whom he took a personal interest, and who was in and out from day to day, had his pockets filled with nuts and ran the proprietor.

The latter's testimonial to the boy's integrity is most interestingly confirmed. For example, the late Samuel W. Wetmore of Buffalo, N. Y., writing in 1899, said

of slavery than did his very opponent, the party of Lincoln." While Judge Kelllogg declared that he would enforce the law in favor of liberty. While Judge Kelllogg declared that, as a law-abiding citizen, he would enforce the Fugitive Slave Law, Ingersoll declared

"Rather than interfere between any human beings, I would be condemned to be chained in the lowest

A graphic account of the Ingersoll-Kelllogg test is given by Colonel Carr, who has already been quoted, and who was a participant in the campaign in which the test occurred. After setting forth his own position on the question of slavery in the states, in another important historical

"We Republicans, therefore, regarded Kelllogg as a champion of freedom and supposed that, as a matter of course, he would appear as the champion of slavery. Never was our wish more wished than were we in Galesburg when we heard Robert G. Ingersoll.

"Immediately upon his nomination Ingersoll accepted the challenge to Kelllogg to joint discussion, face to face, through

## EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO SIXTY-SIX

ate of Missouri, as an 'abolition hole.' \* \* \* In the debate in  
ty, Judge Kellogg had the opening and closing. \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

"After \* \* \* giving the audience to understand that he was not  
abolitionist, and that he favored the Fugitive Slave Law, Judge K  
gg went on to show what a sacred compact the Missouri co  
omise was, \* \* \* and intimated that this young gentleman w  
as running against him would have difficulty in persuading  
ople of Galesburg and that Congressional District to vote for h  
d by so doing favor the extension of slavery into the new T  
ories.

"I remember with what interest I looked at that young man, wh  
e had regarded up to that moment as a pro-slavery Doug  
emocrat, apparently unconsciously listening to what seemed to  
us to be beyond the power of any one to answer. I shall nev  
rget how he looked as he commenced speaking, and as he warm  
to his subject. It seems to me now after the lapse of all these year  
at even then he was the most brilliant, the most inspiring, the mo  
ajestic, and, withal, the most convincing of orators. As the year  
ent by while he and I were young, and as we advanced to and b  
nd middle life, it was my fortune to hear him frequently, and fro  
at hour at Galesburg I have always believed that Robert G. Ing  
ll was the greatest orator who ever stood before a public audience  
"His first sentence, as he commenced speaking, was 'The  
gitive Slave Law is the most infamous enactment that ever d  
aced a statute book;' then he exclaimed—'The man who appro  
or apologizes for that infamy is a brute!'

"This [the author continues, later] was only one of the appalli  
ctures the young orator painted of slavery and the Fugitive Sla

about twenty similar debates, Col  
comments upon Ingersoll's effort:—

“It may be doubted whether there was ever  
human being so terrific a philippic against hu  
Fugitive Slave Law. I myself had heard Beech  
Wendell Phillips and Lovejoy and Giddings, but  
equalled.”

Even had we only the preceding  
Ingersoll's political and sociologic  
time, the question of how truly he  
flected the ideals of his Democrat  
had he been elected, might be saf  
inference of an intelligent public.  
to inference is here required. Indee  
record of events just subsequent t  
in question,—a record which, more  
written in the memories of many s  
ipants,—provides us with the stro  
that Ingersoll, as a Democratic  
would have stood for precisely wh  
among other things, as a candidate—  
and the sublime integrity of the Gr

In this immediate connection m

## *EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO SIXTY-SIX*

the greatest of American orators \* \* \* . This wonderful man was no other than Robert G. Ingersoll, then the Democratic candidate for Congress in our District, Douglas man although he was, no one was so eloquent in denunciation of human slavery and of those who were plotting against the Union. To those of us who knew and heard Robert G. Ingersoll at that time, it was not surprising that the day of the firing upon Fort Sumter he declared himself for our country and against her enemies, and that from that day forward he was a Republican in politics. No man can estimate the power and influence of Ingersoll in arousing the American people to a sense of their solemn responsibilities when the war came upon them, or in awakening them to a sense of justice and a proper appreciation of the rights of men. One must have heard him before a great audience in the open air, as we in Illinois so often did, to appreciate his greatness. Every emotion of his soul, every pulsation of his heart, was for his country and for liberty; and no other man has ever been able to such high a degree to inspire others with the sentiments that animated him. No just history of Illinois can be written without placing him upon the scroll of fame the name of Robert G. Ingersoll."

It will accordingly be seen, at least on the face of the facts of the events, that Ingersoll was a Democrat until the attack upon Fort Sumter, April 12, 1861, and a Republican thence to the day of his death. But to those who have alike the capacity and the candor to see beneath the superficiality of a mere political nomination, it will be convincingly evident, more especially as we proceed, that

§ 3.

In the same year (1860), Ingersoll lectured at Pekin, Ill., the first of his anti-theological lectures, of which any report has been preserved, was entitled *Progress*. This lecture, which, with some slight additions, was again delivered at Bloomington, Ill., in 1864, defines the true goal of progress, discusses the conflict between the material and the spiritual, and presents a magnificent argument of superstition, and of both mental slavery in all their forms. Ingersoll must have recognized in this peroration the grace and ardor of flame from the heart and brain of early manhood,—a heart and brain who, just twenty years later, was “un-  
pronounced, by another great orator and a brilliant speaker of the English tongue, on this globe:—”

“We are standing on the shore of an infinite ocean, waves, freighted with blessings, are welcoming us. Progress has been written on every soul. The vanishing is vanishing.”

“Forward, oh sublime army of progress, forward, forward, until the world is a new world.”



## *EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO SIXTY-SIX*

which, in the immutable succession of cause and effect, occurrences of great import have followed the most trivial incidents,—according to which the lives of very great individuals have been influenced for good or for evil, by the acts of very small ones. Out of all men of genius, Ingersoll is probably the only one the supreme event of whose life hinges wholly on the wanton pranks of perhaps the most despised of the animal kingdom. Nor does the shadow of tragedy that regrettably darkens the brief narrative now to be related detract from its romance.

In the autumn of 1861, in Peoria County, Illinois, some pigs belonging to a farmer, got astray and were impounded. Their owner, endeavoring to free them, ripped some boards off the pound, whereupon the poundmaster interfered and was shot. An indictment for murder followed; and Ingersoll was retained as counsel for the defense. The stirring much public feeling over the case, a change of venue was made in favor of Groveland, in Tazewell County.

preceded to Groveland by Mr. Parker and mother. The latter, Mrs. Sarah Parker, was then the widow of a wealthy merchant—a descendant of Captain Parker who opened the Battle of Lexington with the words: "Stand your ground; don't fire upon; but if they mean to have a war here." Another descendant of Captain Theodore Parker, the Unitarian. The Tavern at Lexington, where met the wounded were taken, and of the battle are still visible, was kept by Mrs. Sarah Buckman Parker. The remarkably intelligent and liberal-minded. At least one of her ancestors was unusual for his day. Joseph Weld, of England, a Quaker, when all the rest of his family were Unitarians. He came to America with his brother; in 1637, Anne Hutchinson was tried for heresy and sentenced to banishment from the Massachusetts Colony, Joseph Weld gave her refuge for three months, or until the wintry cold had abated sufficiently to permit of her departure.

## *EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO SIXTY-SIX*

orthodox believer. Even the wife of her son Benjamin Weld Parker, who was Miss Harriette Lyon, daughter of a prominent resident and paper manufacturer of Newton Lower Falls, Mass., was not a Christian. In fact, if Huxley had been present to offer it, both Mr. and Mrs. Parker doubtless would readily have accepted, as the best-fitting intellectual garment, his title of "Agnostic." And not only were they intellectual: they were more than usually and socially hospitable. The latter seems well evidenced by the fact that one Boston friend came for a visit and remained forty years, another nine years, and still another three years. Many persons came long distances to converse with Mrs. Sarah Buckman Parker, who frequently visited her son. At the Parkers' was such a library as very few possessed in those days; and Plato says that "a house with a library in it has a soul." Certainly there was soul of strongly magnetic quality in this house; for the latter was the center of a very brilliant and influential circle. It stood on the post-road between Springfield and Andover; and many of the best-known names of the

thoughts worthy of the men whose works were crated the frontmost shelves of the library. When, therefore, he visited Groveland mission already mentioned, it was in the hope that Parker having been an eager listener to his frequent defense) that he should receive an invitation to dinner.

At the Parkers' that evening, Robert Ingersoll was impressed by two incidents more deeply than the other: He saw on the wall a book in which were the names "Volney," and "Thomas Paine," and he looked, for the first time, into the eyes of the woman he loved. On the 13th of the following February, in the person of Eva A. Parker, "a woman without spot or blemish" became his wife.

Referring, in after-years, to the circumstances under which they met,—to the shoe-shop, the poundmaster, and the consequent trial in Groveland,—Ingersoll was wont to say, in an epigram: "In the echo of that shot I heard the cry of my babes."





## *EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO SIXTY-SIX*

mightier," for the sacred cause of "Union and liberty" at least, than either tongue or "pen." Accordingly, he was one of the first to respond to the Nation's call, being instrumental in raising three regiments of volunteers, during the summer and autumn of 1861. But we are concerned chiefly with the last of these organizations.

Having obtained (in conjunction with Mr. Basil Meek) permission to form a regiment of Cavalry, Ingersoll "joined for service" on September 16th, and began recruiting in October. He was commissioned colonel, to rank from the 22d of the latter month, by Richard Yates, governor of Illinois. Recruits for the regiment began to arrive at Camp Lyon, Peoria, about November 1st; and on December 20th, the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry volunteers, consisting of twelve full companies, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll commanding, was mustered into the service of the United States and mounted. It remained at Camp Lyon until February 22, 1862, when it broke camp and marched overland to Benton Barracks, Mo., near St. Louis —

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION

It may be doubted whether there ever was another aggregation of officers and men more absolutely devoted to their commander.

March 26th must have furnished a "crowded hour" of mingled sadness and patriotic devotion for Colonel Ingersoll; for on that day the last of his regiment departed, by boat, from St. Louis, for Pittsburg Landing, near the seat of war; and only since February 13th had "the one of all the world" been "wooed and won." Mrs. Ingersoll had accompanied her husband to St. Louis, whence she was to return home.—

"And some are talking with wives, and endeavoring with brave words, spoken in the old tones, to drive from their hearts the awful fear."<sup>2</sup>

On April 1st the regiment landed, the first battalion at Crump's Landing, where it joined the forces of General Lew Wallace; the remainder of the regiment, at Pittsburg Landing, about two miles from which it encamped. It was in the heat of the Battle of Shiloh, on the 6th and 7th, meeting with severe losses in both killed and wounded. In that battle, the greatest that had thus far been



## *EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO SIXTY-SIX*

on for his soldierly conduct and courage. His regiment was on duty between Pittsburg Landing and Corinth until the capture of the latter, and participated in the celebrated raid in its rear. It took part in the engagements at Bolivar, Tenn., on August 30th, and at Davis Bridge, on the Hatchie River, Tenn., on September 25th, sustaining severe losses at the latter. In the Battle of Corinth, on October 3d and 4th,<sup>1</sup> Colonel Ingersoll exemplified the same admirable qualities the possession of which he had demonstrated on the field of Shiloh. In addition to his services in these two memorable battles, and in the less memorable engagements indicated, he of course performed his full share of the extremely active and arduous duties of reconnoitering, scouting, and skirmishing that ordinarily devolve upon cavalry in the field.

During the winter of 1862-'63, his regiment was stationed at Jackson, Tenn. Having been advised that Brigadier-General (subsequently Lieutenant-General) Nathan B. Forrest, of the Confederate army, who was on an expedition into

jective point, apparently, was Jackson about fifty miles to the northwest of Clifton. Accordingly, Colonel Ingersoll left Jackson in the evening of December 16th, taking with him two hundred of his own regiment and one hundred guns) of the Fourteenth Indiana Battery. In the morning of the 17th, he arrived at Lexington, which is a few miles north of the middle of the line between Jackson and Clifton, and where he was joined by two hundred and seventy-five men of the Second West Tennessee. Having resumed his march, he halted, soon after noon, about five miles east of Lexington. At nightfall, his scouts having reported the appearance of the enemy in large force a few miles in front of him, he moved back to within half a mile of Lexington. He was then joined by two hundred of the First Tennessee, making his total force, including a rearguard, about eight hundred officers and men. Of these, about three hundred were poorly equipped, and had never been under fire, while two hundred were raw recruits, having never been drilled. Colonel Ingersoll's troops

## *EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO SIXTY-SIX*

firmishing, an engagement ensued. In his first assault, the enemy, who was now seen to be in great numbers, was gallantly repulsed; but Colonel Ingersoll deemed it best for the main part of his force to fall back and concentrate its efforts in another direction, in which the enemy was reported to be approaching in even greater numbers. By means of a bridge,<sup>1</sup> which, contrary to Colonel Ingersoll's orders, one of the officers under his command had failed to destroy during the previous evening. No sooner had Colonel Ingersoll gained his new position than he found that the enemy was pouring in from all directions. It was then that Colonel Ingersoll exhibited, even more admirably than he had done at Shiloh and Corinth, his cool judgment, remarkable coolness, and bravery. Sending a detachment to hold the bridge, he planted his two guns in the Lexington road, deployed the remainder of his little band of men in a single line at right angles to the road, on either side, and awaited the assault. He did not wait long; for, in a moment, the forces

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRE*

“rebel yell”; and it was impossible to  
Meanwhile, a part of Colonel Ingersoll's  
cavalry, in the rear of the guns, was  
advance and, as soon as those on the rear  
out of the way, charge the enemy, which  
and again repulsed. About this time, Col  
ersoll dismounted and stood by the guns  
aging his men, and personally directing  
until a desperate cavalry charge was tr  
into a hand-to-hand encounter, and until  
swept over and around him. But as we  
child have attempted to arrest the prog  
avalanche. For, despite Colonel Ingers  
sonal gallantry, and that of many of h  
and men, particularly those of his own c  
of the artillery, many others, when m  
atively needed, could not be successful  
and even had the conduct of the latter  
the opposite, the outcome of the engage  
hardly have been different from what it  
the enemy was in overpowering num  
ously estimated, in official Federal repor  
five thousand to twenty thousand incl

## *EIGHTEEN FIFTY-EIGHT TO SIXTY-SIX*

It is significant that General Forrest, reporting to General Bragg, six days later, concerning the and the several other engagements in West Tennessee, commends his officers "for their gallantry in the fight at Lexington," one of them, Captain Frank B. Gurley, of the Fourth Alabama Cavalry, who captured the guns, having lost "his orderly sergeant by the fire of the gun when within 15 feet of its muzzle." General Forrest mentions, in this connection, only one other fight.<sup>1</sup>

It is thoroughly characteristic of Ingersoll that, even at the frightful crisis of his capture, his wit was in active evidence. "Stop firing!" he shouted to Major G. V. Rambaut, of General Forrest's command. "I'll acknowledge you — old Confederacy." Immediately after this the General himself rode up, and substantially the following colloquy occurred:—

"Who's in command of those troops?" cried Forrest, pointing toward some of the flying cavalymen.

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL*

"I don't know," replied Ingersoll.

"Who was in command?"  
General.

"If you'll keep the secret,"  
blandly, "I'll tell you. I was."

At that moment began a  
which terminated only with the  
Forrest. He never lost an oppor-  
the Federal colonel who, "in the  
willingly but wittily became his

Three days after his capture,  
was paroled by General Forrest  
Louis, to command a camp of  
oners. There, despairing of ex-  
to active duty, he resigned his  
was honorably discharged, on Ju-  
the Republic by no means lost  
returning to civil life in Peoria, I  
ardent and patriotic devotion, ever  
further, with his incomparable el-  
prestige, the cause of "Union and

## CHAPTER IV.

### *FROM EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-SEVEN*

ON FEBRUARY 28, 1867, Ingersoll became attorney-general of Illinois, serving such until January 11, 1869. He was appointed by Governor Richard J. Oglesby, undoubtedly would have succeeded himself if the office was made elective, had he not renounced the candidacy therefor. The reasons for the re-jection indicated will be noted later. Meantime come, in proper narrative sequence, to another act which, for manliness,—for unswept fidelity to the dictates of conscience,—has not been surpassed in the history of American politics.

On May 6, 1868, the Republican state convention met in Peoria to select a candidate for the governorship of Illinois.

standing their high personal regard, could not afford to launch the bark of their opinions without some assurance that they would not be dashed against the jagged rock of prejudice. They wanted a pledge from their president, who, be it marked, had yet to win the respect and renown. Accordingly, a committee was appointed to confer with him, the convention adjourned, and await the result. It had not long

“Gentlemen, I am not asking to be governor of Illinois. I have in my composition that which I have decided to keep. My views upon religion. My position I would not change. I cannot, in any circumstances, not even for my life, seem to renounce my religious belief. I refuse to be president of the United States if my religious belief is my own. It belongs to me. It belongs to Illinois. I would not smother one sentiment of mine for the emperor of the round globe.”

In these days, when the gaze of the world is extended without revealing a political motive, of a priest, this reply is as strange as a well would be a fountain that should flow from the fevered breast of the desert.

For the sake of narrative completeness and historic justice, I may add that



*EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN*

ersoll to become one, and who, to say the least, did not prevent his friends, in that very convention, from making political capital of the fact that ersoll was an "infidel."

And this is not the worst: the same individual who sought to stake the mental manhood of ersoll upon a "tower of silence," to be pecked at by the unclean vultures of politics, now desired to retain him as "guide, counselor, and friend." His wisdom, his eloquence—his prestige—must not be lost to them. And so, by the strange alchemy of hypocrisy, his disqualifications for the gubernatorial candidacy suddenly became qualifications for that of attorney-general. Accordingly, instead of following injury; and he was asked to accept nomination for the latter office. But Robert G. ersoll still stood sponsor for his manhood; and his reply on this occasion was about as evasive and difficult of comprehension as had been his reply to the committee from the convention, and presumably, for that reason, did not afford as much pleasure to him who became the successful candidate.

concerned, sealed Ingersoll's door in Illinois, but throughout the United States.

There occurred, in connection with the campaign, a little incident which, revealing a sense of justice,—his tenderness and sympathy,—even more impressively than his replies to the politicians revealed his character. In fact, it is here impossible to omit. The house of English is filled with prices of the long before I heard of this incident (for myself alone) as to which was which the tenderest, expression in that the *greatest* was Shakespeare's "no darkness but ignorance," and the *best*, most *compassionate*, was Whitman's "the sun excludes you, do I exclude you." The incident of Ingersoll changed my mind. Particulars of that incident are as follows:

Soon after the campaign, Ingersoll and some of his associates were gathered in Peoria. Some one mentioned that the orthodox political opponents had charged that he had referred to "the legitimate child."

## EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN

But Ingersoll replied :—

“Gentlemen, it isn't to have you think that I would call Christ ‘an illegitimate child’ which hurts me: it is to think that you should think that I would think any the less of Christ if I knew it was so.”

It has been stated by many whose judgment is entitled to great weight, that, had Ingersoll kept silent on religious questions, any place within the gift of the people might have been his. For example, the resolutions of the memorial meeting which was held in Peoria on July 23, 1899, and which was participated in by the most prominent residents of that place,—his lifelong acquaintances and former fellow-citizens and neighbors,—contained the following :—

“\* \* \* At a time when everything impelled him to conceal his opinions, or to withhold their expression, *when the highest honors of the state were his if he would but avoid the discussion of the questions that relate to futurity*, he avowed his belief; he did not bow his knee to superstition, nor countenance a creed from which his intellect dissented.

“Casting aside all the things for which men most sigh—political power, the power to direct the fate of a nation—

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL A

*feel that he was greater than a martyr, greater than a mere hero—he was a thoroughly honest man.*

Hon. Clark E. Carr (ex-minister) who is intimately and personally acquainted with the last fifty years of the political life of Illinois, said, in an eloquent address at an Ingersoll memorial meeting in Chicago, 1899:—

“We remember how, on account of his splendid and sublime patriotism, we in Knox county and in our State united in seeking to place him in the chief executive office. *We remember that by modifying certain views he had been nominated by acclamation and elected to the office of Governor of Illinois, which would have opened the door to the emoluments and positions; and we remember his courage and firmness he held to his convictions, and that in the face of the opposition, the appeal of friends, nor the allurements of power, he refused to move him to accept as true what he could not believe.*

“It is my strong conviction,” wrote Wm. D. Conway, in the *South Atlantic*, London, “that but for orthodox and conservative influences in the United States. Certainly no man has ever occupied that office.”

*EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN*

the following, if, indeed, in much more intimate terms: 'Were it not for your attitude on religion you could, with your ability and personality, have won any honor that it is possible for the American people to bestow.'

Strange as it may seem to some, the recipient of these intended compliments never appreciated them, and what an alternative mediocrity did put at his feet! As a matter of fact, there was no place in this Republic that could have honored Robert C. Ingersoll. And he could no more have preserved silence on religion, than Shelley could have remained from pouring forth the marvelous poetry that now glorifies the realm of fancy. Where was the man with imagination enough to picture the human frame of ample proportions, that classic head and fine, frank face—that embodiment of all the gradations of temperament, from clown to king—lying acquiescent at the feet of a Talmage!

And suppose that Ingersoll had become president of the United States. Suppose that, unheeding the silent voice within, he had agreed to accept the nomination for the same office.

How many can recall the names of presidents? We remember Washington first. We remember Jefferson, who is the sublimest of human documents; the noble sage, whose lamp of wisdom And we remember Lincoln, in whose face the sadness and sorrow, the anguish and the consolation, of a people; who kept unscattered in the skies the stars of the Republic; who caused the bow to arch alike the white and the black like lightning, always taking the stars often struck in the highest places of humor, like sunshine, silvered and clouds of war";—Lincoln! in his fetters, at his feet the bowed slave, the ruthless fields, his hand the la- dying soldier's brow.

The truth is, that, in levying there is no extrinsic substitute for In the inexorable necessity of things can ultimately be otherwise than No office *per se* can be great enough

*EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN*

They should also consider, that rarely, with a people, has the greatest been chosen to lead to rule. Nor should this excite surprise; for the individual who bears the unmistakable stamp of moral and intellectual grandeur almost invariably differs sufficiently from his fellows to incur their disapproval, if not their contempt. Nature does not make and break a special die to please the multitude.

Far from regrettable, Ingersoll's declination of the nomination for the governorship of Illinois was one of the richest blessings that ever befell the cause of intellectual freedom. It was an incident which, to the real friend of progress, must ever recall the spirit of the Declaration and of the Emancipation.

In the first place, Ingersoll yearned for infinitely higher things than the governorship of any state, or the presidency of any country, whatever. He could not have been satisfied with being the mere servant of a people. He himself possessed not only ears, but a voice. He had a message for mankind and he would deliver the

would have been extinguished—like  
upon a flame of morning-glories!  
drunk a subtle poison which, unlike  
would have sought out and destroyed  
of his moral being. He would have  
self,—would have thrust an ignominy  
gag into his own mouth; and even  
glass of conscience,—the mirror of  
would have seen that gag projecting.

And suppose, again, that he had  
dent of the United States, as he  
would have done had he listened  
sirens of Illinois. What, in general,  
been the result? A splendid hy  
White House; a vast number of  
Federal troops in attendance at pro  
ing-bees"—that is, the protection of  
zeus at home; some allegations  
citizens in China and Turkey ha  
tected in their "rights"; a few  
snubs for the royal tyrants of  
Europe; a volume or so of really  
papers" (not to mention the four  
proclamations!); a lot of half-measures.



lead"; the record of one who did more for the emancipation of the human mind than all the governors and presidents of history; the record of a man who pursued the straight, unswerving course that wins the hatred of the many and the love of the few,—the execration of the present and the oak and laurel of the future.

## § 2.

On September 14, 1869, at Peoria, on the occasion of the unveiling of a statue to that deathless aviant, Ingersoll first delivered his lecture on *Humboldt*—a life dedicated to the demonstration of "the sublimest of truths," that "the universe is governed by law."

And in the following year came the lecture on *Thomas Paine*; for "with his name left out, the story of liberty cannot be written."

In 1872 was published *The Gods*, a lecture, which demonstrated that "each nation has created a god who 'has always resembled his creators,' naturally lays down, as an initial proposition, this strid-

erty, a word without which all o  
vain."

§ 3.

In the autumn of 1875, accom  
wife and children (Eva and Ma  
made a brief tour abroad, visiting  
land, and France. Upon his retur  
Peoria, on November 16th, for t  
"The National Blues," a local mili  
tion, one of the most characterist  
his lifetime. It was entitled: *What  
What I Did Not See, in England  
France*. In it, we have many an  
of his attitude at the shrine of de  
Of his visit to Westminster Abbey,  
he says:—

"Here I came upon a statue of Shakespeare  
column, and in his hand a scroll, on which was a q  
*Tempest*:

"And, like the baseless fabric of this vi  
The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeou  
The solemn temples, the great globe i  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve  
And 'tilt at their own foundation."

## *EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN*

While in Paris, Ingersoll asked the superintendent of Père Lachaise if he could direct him to the tomb of Auguste Comte; but the superintendent had never even heard of the author of the "Positive Philosophy." Ingersoll then asked the superintendent if he had ever heard of Napoleon Bonaparte.

"Of course I have," he answered, in a half-sarcastic tone. "Why do you ask me such a question?"

"Simply that I might have the opportunity of saying," replied Ingersoll, "that when everything connected with Napoleon, except his crimes, shall have been forgotten, Auguste Comte will be lovingly remembered as a benefactor of the human race." Whether or not Ingersoll then found the object of his inquiry, he found the tomb of Napoleon Bonaparte and his now world-famous "Soliloquy" there, first given in the lecture above mentioned, was the result.

### § 4.

The year 1876 was one of the most interesting

be innocent; while only two days later  
 "to fulfill a promise made many years  
 pronounced at the grave of his father,  
 Benjamin Weld Parker, the first of his  
 which, for purity, simplicity, and charm,  
 and for pathos and truly poetic recognition  
 nothingness of all animate nature in  
 of the inevitable tragedy of death, was  
 posterity unequaled in our tongue.

§ 5.

But Ingersoll's chief accomplishment was  
 dramatic act, his most consummate and  
 a whole, during this year, and, in its  
 influence for his personal preference  
 oratorical triumph of his life, was the  
 of Blaine for the presidency, at the  
 national convention, in Cincinnati.  
 From a reputation that was hardly more  
 he sprang to a reputation that was  
 oratorical wonder of his state, he became  
 half-hour, the Cicero of his country.  
 As *The Elegy*, in a moment, made C  
 as *The Cotter's Saturday Night* ins

*EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN*

upon his brow the fadeless laurel of Polymath, as he tossed from his fervent lips the "shining lance" and argent "plume" of James G. Blaine.

That Ingersoll's triumph was inevitable is certain now, when we consider the man and the time, as it was surprising then. The year,—it was historic—a year of patriotic memories; the issues,—they were fraught with as much gravity as anything that could concern the citizens of the Republic. The party,—although in power, it was beginning to show symptoms of internal discontent, of dissension, of weakness, and, for the first time in twelve years, its most hopeful wisdom beheld what appeared were the shadowy portents of defeat; the convention,—it was, both because of those present and of those whose interests were there at stake, one of almost unexampled dignity, but without the convention in which the tides and currents of ambition and intrigue surged fierce and wild; the prospective nominee,—he was the most audacious, the most impetuous, and the most inspiring of leaders—the idol of the hour. Such a year, such

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND

took on an increased volume of sound ; and for the  
ing fury of acclamation, the wild waving of fans  
chiefs, transformed the scene from one of delir-  
bedlam of rapturous delirium. Ingersoll wait-  
serenity until he should get a chance to be heard  
then began an appeal, impassioned, artful, be-  
sive. \* \* \*

" Possessed of a fine figure, a face of winning  
Ingersoll had half won his audience before he spoke  
attestation of every man that heard him, that stroke  
stroke was never uttered before a political conven-  
indescribable. The coolest-headed in the hall  
wildest expression. The adversaries of Blaine, at-  
listened with unswerving, absorbed attention. His  
his eyes and mouth wide open, his figure moving  
tremendous periods that fell in a measured, exqui-  
from the Illinoisan's smiling lips. The matchless  
of the man can never be imagined from the report  
the prodigious force, the inexpressible power, the  
of the audience, requires actual sight.

" Words can do but meager justice to the wiza-  
traordinary man. He swayed and moved and im-  
and worked, in all ways, with the mass before him  
some key to the innermost mechanism that move  
and when he finished, his fine, frank face as calm  
the overwrought thousands sank back in an exha-  
wonder and delight." <sup>1</sup>

### The speech :—

" Massachusetts may be satisfied with the loyal  
Bristow : so am I : but if any man, nominated by

## *EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN*

"The Republicans of the United States demand as their leader in the great contest of 1876 a man of intelligence, a man of integrity, a man of well-known and approved political opinions. They demand a statesman; they demand a reformer after as well as before the election. They demand a politician in the highest, broadest and best sense of the word; a man of superb moral courage. They demand a man acquainted with public affairs—with the wants of the people; with not only the requirements of the hour, but with the demands of the future. They demand a man broad enough to comprehend the relations of this Government to the other nations of the earth. They demand a man well versed in the powers, duties and prerogatives of each and every department of this Government. They demand a man who will sacredly preserve the financial honor of the United States; one who knows enough to know that the national debt must be paid through the prosperity of this people; one who knows enough to know that all the financial theories in the world cannot redeem a single dollar; one who knows enough to know that all the money must be made, not by law, but by labor; one who knows enough to know that the people of the United States have the industry to make the money, and the honor to pay it over just as fast as they make it.

"The Republicans of the United States demand a man who knows that prosperity and resumption, when they come, must come together; that when they come, they will come hand in hand through the golden harvest fields; hand in hand by the whirling spindles and the turning wheels; hand in hand past the open furnace doors; hand in hand by the flaming forges; hand in hand by the chimneys filled with eagle smoke, greeted and grasped by the countless sons of toil.

"This money has to be dug out of the earth. You cannot make it by passing resolutions in a political convention.

"The Republicans of the United States want a man who knows

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL A

"Our country, crowned with the vast and ma of its first century, asks for a man worthy of th of her future; asks for a man who has the au for a man who is the grandest combination of b brain beneath her flag—such a man is James G.

"For the Republican host, led by this intrepid defeat.

"This is a grand year—a year filled with reo olution; filled with proud and tender memories sacred legends of liberty—a year in which the drink from the fountains of enthusiasm; a year call for the man who has preserved in Congre won upon the field; a year in which they c has torn from the throat of treason the tongu man who has snatched the mask of Democra face of rebellion; for the man who, like an i stood in the arena of debate and challenged al still a total stranger to defeat.

"Like an armed warrior, like a plumed kni marched down the halls of the American Co shining lance full and fair against the brazen famers of his country and the maligners of Republican party to desert this gallant leader army should desert their general upon the field

"James G. Blaine is now and has been for sacred standard of the Republican party. I cal human being can stand beneath its folds without remaining free.

"Gentlemen of the convention, in the name of the only republic that ever existed upon this e all her defenders and of all her supporters; in soldiers living: in the name of all her soldiers



*EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN*

of this speech, which, as is so well known, awakened unprecedented enthusiasm, not only in the United States and other English-speaking countries, but in France, where it was translated into the national tongue, are of the deepest interest.

Not only Blaine, but Morton also (who was a warm friend of the orator, and whom the latter greatly admired), had requested Ingersoll to place his name before the convention. Being favorable to both, and the matter not being subject to personal preference, he informed them that, as a member of the Illinois delegation, he would present the name of that delegation's choice.<sup>1</sup>

It was nearing the midnight preceding the nomination when Ingersoll and his brother "Clark" reached their apartment at the hotel in Cincinnati. Not a sentence of the speech that Robert must be ready within twelve hours to deliver had been set in final form, nor even roughly sketched on paper. His brother, aware of this, was filled with affectionate anxiety. He feared that Robert, through mere negligence, might not rise as gloriously as he knew him to be capable of doing.

permitted himself to worry about the of a speech. So the two brothers retired soon asleep.

Suddenly Robert awoke. It was so he felt refreshed,—alert. Quietly stepped into the adjoining room, closed behind him, lit the gas. It was three sat down, and the subject-matter and of the prospective speech passed before him like a panorama—the year, the issue, the candidate, the vast assemblage in the Hall. The picture was complete. He had it; now he must *hear* it—it must satisfy the poet-orator. He picked up a pen and made a few tentation, here and there, to rhythm and tone-coloring, cadence, and—genius to his work! Then Robert Ingersoll, with that “Clark” didn’t even dream of light and returned to bed as noiseless as a risen.

Suddenly he woke again, or rather, —“Clark” was tugging at his arm with unfortunate anxiety. ‘It was nine o’clock

ly rejoined, as he drew a manuscript from his pocket and began to read.

"When did you write it?" asked his amazed and delighted brother, at the close.

"Oh, last night, while you were asleep," answered Robert.

Thus was written in solitude, and delivered first to an audience of one, the "Plumed Knight Speech." Thus was kindled, in the pale glimmer of the "midnight oil," the most brilliant flash of eloquence that ever electrified a political convention.

## § 6.

On July 4th, "one hundred years" after "our fathers retired the gods from politics," Ingersoll delivered at Peoria the *Centennial Oration*. While the latter, from opening to close, breathes the most lofty, inspiring, and worshipful patriotism, it contains one passage in particular which, because of its sheer simplicity of diction, and tenderness of pathos, it is here impossible to omit. This of the men who bore the Stars and Stripes from the little

wife to defend herself, and he left the prattling babies by their mother and by nature. The mother re-planted the corn and the potatoes, and hoed them for the children, and, in the darkness of night, told the brave father and the 'sacred cause.' She told him while the war would be over and father would come with honor and glory.

"Think of the women, of the sweet children whose footsteps of the dead—who waited through the years for the dear ones who never came." (ix 78)

If the time ever comes when the majority of Americans can read without emotion the Declaration of Independence, then will the Declaration of Independence have been in vain.

## § 7.

The campaign following the speech was, for Ingersoll, as far as purely political was concerned, a period of unparalleled influence. Of his reasons for this he told us very plainly. He entered the campaign, he says, not as a politician, but as a cate and defender of certain principles which he believed rested the welfare of the country. He entered the Hayes campaign, because

## *EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN*

the campaign," he says, "simply because the rights of American citizens in at least sixteen states of the Union were trampled under foot. \* \* \* I felt that it was necessary to arouse the North. I felt that it was necessary to tell again the story of the Rebellion, from Bull Run to Appomattox. I felt that it was necessary to describe what the Southern people were doing with Union men, and with colored men; and I felt it necessary so to describe it that the people of the North could hear the whips, and could hear the drops of blood as they fell upon the withered leaves." (ix 228) That he did all this and much more, the written and traditional accounts of the most remarkable political campaign in our history are ample proof. The number of speeches that he made in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and especially in Maine, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin, is simply enormous, and, what is far more significant, the size, character, and enthusiasm of the assemblages that he addressed are alike unprecedented in American history. Every speech, no matter how many have

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

"\* \* \* no report could do justice to such a man of the great western orator, and we have not attained any adequate impression of an address which is considered to be the most remarkable for originality, power and interest heard in this section.

"Such a speech by such a man—if there is another—its magnetism of the speaker must be felt; the indescribable must be experienced, in order to appreciate his greatness. \* \* \* During portions of his address there was the eyes of every person in the audience, and from open held the assemblage by a spell more potent than that have ever heard speak. It was one of the grandest, thrilling appeals in behalf of the great principles of truth and justice to all men, ever delivered, and we wish it heard by every citizen of our beloved Republic." (ix)

It is stated, that, after one of Ingersoll's lectures in Maine, the professor of Greek in a college said:—

"If Demosthenes was ever as eloquent as Ingersoll properly reported."

The speech at Cooper Union, New York, September 10th, was, according to *The Daily Times*:

"\* \* \* irresistible—magnificent. It swept along an assemblage of greater numbers and finer character than in our national metropolis to hear any political speech."

## EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN

"\* \* \* the presiding officer wisely decided to submit no other speaker to the too severe test of speaking on the same occasion with Mr. Ingersoll."

The *New York Speech*, like the *Bangor Speech*, was published without revision by the orator.

Eleven days later, at Indianapolis, in the course of an address "to the veteran soldiers of the Rebellion,"—almost before the enthusiastic echoes of the "Plumed Knight Speech" had died away,—he gave voice to that imaginative flight which has since become universally known as *A Vision of War* and which, beyond the uttermost reach of dispute, is the most inspiring, the sublimest, the most truthful, the most perfect, of war-paintings. The reader who does not fully realize the latter would do well to turn from Hugo on Waterloo, or from Lincoln at Gettysburg, to Ingersoll at Indianapolis. It is not uninteresting, as a test of eloquence, that, during the address last indicated, (the audience being in the open air) two heavy showers occurred without causing any one to seek shelter, many indeed remaining rapt and motionless while the water actually "trickled down their backs."

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION

summate ease, the most eloquent orator of the English tongue.

On October 5th, twenty thousand people,—said to be the largest political audience that had ever gathered in northern Indiana,—greeted him at Elkhart, special trains being run on all railway branches centering there. He was welcomed with the most eager enthusiasm; for the occasion, far from an ordinary incident of the campaign, was rather an ovation to Ingersoll individually, after his triumphant tour of the eastern states.

Passing over the details of the day, it is no less "curious" now than then "to watch the immense crowd, moved with the thought of the orator"; to witness its "tremendous outbursts" and, anon, its breathless suspense, 'as eye seeks eye in silent wonder.' Even more absorbing is the view afforded by the account of a member of the party that journeyed from Chicago to participate in the welcome:—

"Ingersoll began in his characteristic way, lifting his audience to climax after climax, until men and women who had been seated stood on their feet. \* \* \* Looking down on this vast



## EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN

down from his lofty flight with an easy grace, and seemed to see a bird on wing over the group of women in drab."

His final political speech of this year was delivered in Chicago, on October 20th. No full stenographic report was made. Extracts, however, were authoritatively preserved and published.

Intent on choosing the most trustworthy medium for conveying, at this late date, something akin to an adequate impression of the appreciation of the orator on the occasion indicated, the temptation to quote from the *Chicago Tribune* of October 21, 1876, the words of one who was present, is too strong to resist:—

"Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll spoke last night at the Exposition Building to the largest audience ever drawn by one man in Chicago. From 6:30 o'clock the sidewalks fronting along the building were jammed. At every entrance there were hundreds, and half-an-hour later thousands were clamoring for admittance. So great was the pressure the doors were finally closed, and the entrances at either end cautiously opened to admit the select who knew enough to apply in those directions. Occasionally a rush was made for the main door, and as the crowd came up against the huge barricade they were swung back only for another effort. Wabash Avenue, Monroe, Adams, Jackson, and Van Buren Streets were jammed with ladies and gen-

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRE

political meeting in Chicago. They came by the last speaker looked down from his perch upon them and their faces, stamped with the most intense interest in his words.

"The galleries were packed. The frame of the building creaked, groaned, and swayed with the crowd pressing against the trusses bore their living weight. The gallery railing below the roof was crowded, and the sky-lights trembled with the weight and there an adventurous youth crept out on the gutter. Towards the northern end of the building, on the smaller gallery, dark, and not particularly strong, but fairly packed—packed like a sardine box—with men in the organ-loft around the sides of the organ, every human being could sit, stand, or hang, was present."

"It was a magnificent outpouring, at least 5000 people, a compliment alike to the principle it represented, and the speaker."

Another writer<sup>1</sup> who was present (a reporter) stated, in a subsequent description of the meeting, that he "never saw anything so great with the wild excitement and enthusiasm manifested by the people" when it was announced that Ingersoll was approaching. "If," in his description, "the queen of England or the czar of Russia had been coming into the hall from one end, and Ingersoll at the other, I believe, would have been turned toward him."

## § 8.

In the following year (1877), national questions not distracting his attention, Ingersoll continued with renewed vigor, his anti-theological crusade. In his first lecture, *The Liberty of Man, Woman and Child*, he made, not for himself alone, but on behalf of his fellows, clerical and lay, what afterwards advised every other man and every woman to make,—“an individual declaration of independence.” He said:—

“I have made up my mind to say my say. I shall do it kindly and distinctly; but I am going to do it. I know there are thousands of men who substantially agree with me, but who are not in a condition to express their thoughts. They are poor; they are in business; and they know that should they tell their honest thought, persons will refuse to patronize them—to trade with them; they wish to get bread for their little children; they wish to take care of their wives; they wish to have homes and the comforts of life. Every such person is a certificate of the meanness of the community in which he resides. And yet I do not blame these people for not expressing their thoughts. I say to them: ‘Keep your ideas to yourselves; feed and clothe the ones you love; I will do your talking for you. The church cannot crush, cannot crush, cannot starve, cannot stop or stay me; I will express your thoughts.’” (i 354)

INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRE

eyeless sockets with their fleshless hands forever from the imagination of men,"

Ingersoll having delivered this (as preceding) lecture in San Francisco, that city, eager to discover a vulnerable point which to attack him from the pulpit, forthwith to the late Mr. William Reynolds, a prominent religious worker, at the lecture (Peoria), asking to be furnished with any information reflecting upon the latter's character. Mr. Reynolds replied that, Ingersoll's anti-theological views, though such information. But the clergy's attack just the same! Ingersoll retorted 27th, with *My Reviewers Reviewed*, his ablest and lengthiest lectures.

His address *About Farming in Ill.* during this season, contains the following epigram: "To plow is to pray, to sow is prophecy, and the harvest answers and

*The Eight to Seven Address*, so called because eight of the congressional electoral college members declared for the election of

ving city; William Lloyd Garrison, James  
 fields, and the governor of Massachusetts bei  
 nong those present. "The lecture," as B  
 nians insisted upon calling it, opened with  
 ncise statement of Ingersoll's reasons for parti  
 ating in the campaign of Hayes, and "contain  
 witty, philosophical, and intensely patriotic vi  
 the political contest preceding and following t  
 cent election, with wise and timely suggestio  
 r preventing similar perils in the future."  
 oston paper stated that Ingersoll's reputation  
 e greatest living orator was conceded to be firm  
 and justly established.

Ingersoll also published during this year a *Re*  
*cation of Thomas Paine*, it being a reply to t  
 ew York *Observer's* attack upon the "Auth  
 ero of the Revolution."

## § 9.

Not long after the inauguration of Hayes, In  
 soll's friends, including the entire congressional  
 delegation from Illinois, requested the president

That the matter afforded him no lament is shown by the following extract from a letter to Dr. Moncure D. Conway, then in London:—

“You have probably seen by the despatches that the mission. The religious press raised a most hypocritical anguish. Hypocrites of the secular papers and believers in denouncing the appointment. It was the panic occasioned by so small a matter. I was never would be said. Upon the whole, the comments of the were very gratifying indeed. Not so much because of the kindness to me, but for the reason that they took the religion was purely a personal matter with which the right to meddle, one way or the other.”

His name was also mentioned with reference to the Paris mission and the position of general, and, in Illinois, with reference to the States senatorship.

§ 10.

In November of this year, he removed toington. Twenty years before, he left the social and slumberous confines of Shawnee for his intellectual and artistic pursuits.

EIGHTEEN SIXTY-SEVEN TO SEVENTY-SEVEN

That all his powers and attributes had become unified and coherent force. There, he had met the greatest intellects of the world,—the philosophers, statesmen, inventors, poets, dramatists, novelists, and scientists of all ages,—his constant companions. There, his political, religious, and philosophical opinions had taken definite form. There, he had laid the foundation broad and deep. Not only this: upon that foundation, he had stood the uncompromising champion of both physical and intellectual liberty, had won the honors of the soldier, had stood in the political arena unsullied and incorruptible, had stood peerless at the bar, and, as an orator, had been crowned with fame. At Peoria, he had written not only his first lecture, but one of his very greatest, *The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child*. There, he had first practised and expounded that social and domestic philosophy which was to make him the universal champion at the fireside, and the friend of the unfortunate—the orphan, the imprisoned, the wretched, the despised. To his fellow-citizens, he was nature's nobleman.

## CHAPTER V.

### *FROM EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-ONE*

**I**N 1878 Ingersoll wrote his *Rob* lecture. It was published posthumously as unrevised original "notes" of it among the orator's papers.

Robert Ingersoll adored Robert B. was doubtless quite another circuit prompted Rev. Henry Ward Beecher as an epitaph for the Great Agnostic name of "the ploughman poet."

Ingersoll once said:—

" \* \* \* the first man that let up the curtain ever opened a blind, that ever allowed a little sunshin was Robert Burns. I went to get my shoes mended with them. And I had to wait till they were done.

"When I went into the shop of the old Scotch s reading a book, and when he took my shoes in hand



## *EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE*

"Burns you know is a little valley, not very wide, but full of sunshine; a little stream runs down making music over the rocks, children play upon the banks; narrow roads overrun with flowers covered with blossoms, happy children, the hum of bees, and birds pour out their hearts and enrich the air. That is Burns (ii 172)

In further description of the first impression which the latter made upon him, he elsewhere said:—

"I was familiar with the writings of the devout and insincere, the cold and petrified, the pure and heartless. Here was a natural honest man. I knew the works of those who regarded all nature as depraved and who looked upon love as the legacy and perpetual witness of original sin. Here was a man who plucked joy from the mire, mended the addresses of peasant girls, and enthroned the honest man. One who with sympathy, with loving arms, embraced all forms of suffering life, who hated slavery of every kind, who was as natural as heaven's blue, who was warmer kindly as an autumn day, with wit as sharp as Ithuriel's spear, and scorn that blasted like the simoon's breath. A man who looked upon this world, this life, the things of every day, and placed above all the thrilling ecstasies of human love.

"I read and read again with rapture, tears and smiles, feeling that a great heart was throbbing in the lines." (iv 37)

The lecture (which begins by placing Burns next to Shakespeare) considers, with rare poet

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX*

orators do not produce prose—(As a man of letters, prose is about all that most of them do.) and Ingersoll is not generally received as a literary critic. Nevertheless, his eulogy on Burns and Tennyson is at once one of the masterly pieces of prose, and one of the most sympathetic, and illuminating pieces to be found in English letters.

Ingersoll was abroad this year, for the first and last time, visiting England, Scotland, and France; and it was on August 10th, during his sojourn at the birthplace of Burns, that he wrote the following poem, with which the volume concludes:—

**"THE BIRTHPLACE OF BURNS.**

"Though Scotland boasts a thousand names  
Of patriot, king and peer,  
The noblest, grandest of them all  
Was loved and cradled here;  
Here lived the gentle peasant-Prince,  
The loving cotter-king,  
Compared with whom the greatest lord

## EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE

“ Within this hallowed hut I feel  
Like one who clasps a shrine,  
When the glad lips at last have touched  
The something deemed divine.  
And here the world through all the years,  
As long as day returns,  
The tribute of its love and tears  
Will pay to Robert Burns.”

It bespeaks a praiseworthy mental breadth in at least two adherents to the faith which both Burns and Ingersoll unreservedly condemned, that Mr. John E. Milholland, of New York, and *Ian Murray* (Rev. Dr. John Watson) were instrumental in securing for this poem its rightful place on the walls of the Burns cottage at Alloway.

Their action came about, as follows. On a visit to Ayr, Mr. Milholland was given a copy of the poem, in ordinary print, minus the name of the author. Resenting the literary wrong thus being perpetrated, he took with him, on a subsequent visit, a photographic copy of the original manuscript, on cardboard, with marginal portraits of Burns and Ingersoll. With this, he appealed to his friend Dr. Watson, asking that he call a meeting

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX*

the dark and silent valley, on December 1, 1852, not knowing that, in the chubby little child, she was patiently wondering at her tearful child—her kisses, so many and so tender, had endowed mankind with the noblest of gifts. She left behind another child to whom she gave her kisses, her strange white stillness, quite so wonderful, yet—wonderful!—mamma “sleep” so long? He would be ten years old—would mamma be “asleep” to-day? Perhaps not. But on December 1, 1852, Robert, prattling, played with his blocks while Ebon Clark Ingersoll stood by and looked on—wondering. In a little while he knew that mamma would not wake, and she would always lie still and cold. Their thought kept their hearts warm to the day when “Love is a flower that grows on the grave.”

And so, from day to day, from year to year, here and there,—in sunshine and in shadow,—the memory of mother to guide them, and “Robin,” as they came to call her,

*EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE*

scussing them until, upon all of the questions involved, they thought substantially as one, and of course, substantially as the preacher did not. It is surprising that if, in matters theological, one of these brothers was the more radical, it was "Clark." Probably this was due to a temperamental difference; for, where his more gifted brother would argue with the orthodox, "Clark" would refrain from the discussion of dogmas to the simplicity of which, he felt, ought to be perfectly transparent to every one. He was in unqualified agreement with the dictum of Thomas Paine, that to argue with a man who has renounced Reason is like giving medicine to the dead." But in the light of the preceding, we can imagine how real must have been the sympathies of brother occupying so high an intellectual plane as "Clark" and "Robin." Between their minds, as between their hearts, was a golden and inseverable bond. When, therefore, they began to tread ambitious upward paths, they were hand in hand. Together they went to the bar at Mount Vernon—into pra-

INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRA

article concerning "Clark's" official Washington.

Next to Eva Ingersoll herself, "Clark" was Robert's most loving critic. In the long before the latter's genius soared wings of recognition,—"Clark" was conscious of the divine fire that kindled in the great soul beside him. And when, at the Cincinnati convention, Robert, already the wonder of a state, became, in those few able moments, the oratorical wonder of "Clark" was the first to clasp his brother in inexpressible pride and joy. Another month later, brought the following:

"LAW OFFICE OF L. C. I.

"810 F ST.,

"WASHINGTON.

"EVER DEAREST BROTHER:

"I have just read your grand oration delivered on the 1st of July. It is full of sublime utterances and truths. You are always at the *bed-rock* of things. Your thoughts are deeper and broader than anybody; and then you are *unmeasured*! Your thoughts have the interminable and boundless of the ocean, and the directness of a ray of light. I wish your words could be read by every human being on the globe."

*EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE*

Again, with assurance not only of personal admiration and devotion, but of the admiration and devotion of others :—

“ 1403 K St.,

“ WASHINGTON, D. C.

“ April 3, '77

EVER DEAREST BROTHER :

“ I recd. yours with report of your speech at Chicago. I ran it hurriedly and saw you had made the best of all your political speeches. I cannot tell you how proud I am of you. Your name and praise are in the mouth of every one I meet. I put the paper in my pocket and brought it over to the White House. I told Rogers about it, and he suggested that I should leave it with him, so he might read it to the President. I left it with him, but on condition he would return it to me. He has not called since, but will to-night, and get it. Then I will read it with pleasure. Before going over to the White House, I received a telegram, addressed to you, from S———, saying, in substance, ‘ I rely on you to write biographical sketch of Hayes, for encyclopedia? Would furnish you the *few* facts necessary, and you could embellish them.’ Hayes wished me to send you his best regards, and Rogers also. Gen’l Sherman called the other evening, at the White House, on you and me. I had a pleasant visit with him, and as he was leaving he said : ‘ Give my *love* to your brother when you write. I am lonesome without you, and am pretty blue. When shall I hear from you again to my heart again?’

“ Ever your devoted brother

“ CLARK.”

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPR*

other as intensely as they, cannot, as stated; but that no other two ever intensely is at least morally certain.

When, therefore, on May 31, 1870, suddenly stilled the heart of Ebon Clark visited his brother with a grief more overpowering than he had ever experienced only, but a grief that few brothers, as ever known. It was only after great mastery of his feelings, that he was able to take the fulfilment of the loving company years before; and as he stood at his brother's bier, his grief, frequently with tearful interference with his utterance, compelled an interruption more pathetic even words:—

“Dear Friends: I am going to do that which the dear one would do for me.

“The loved and loving brother, husband, father, friend, manhood's morning almost touches noon, and while the shadows still were falling toward the west.

“He had not passed on life's highway the stone highest point; but being weary for a moment, he lay wayside, and using his burden for a pillow, fell into sleep that kisses down his eyelids still. While yet a



## EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE

"This brave and tender man in every storm of life was oak and rock; but in the sunshine he was vine and flower. He was the friend of all heroic souls. He climbed the heights, and left all superstitions below, while on his forehead fell the golden dawning of a new and grander day.

"He loved the beautiful, and was with color, form, and music touched to tears. He sided with the weak, the poor, and wronged and lovingly gave alms. With loyal heart and with the purest hands he faithfully discharged all public trusts.

"He was a worshiper of liberty, a friend of the oppressed. A thousand times I have heard him quote these words: '*For Justice to place a temple, and all season, summer.*' He believed that happiness is the only good, reason the only torch, justice the only weapon, humanity the only religion, and love the only priest. He added to the sum of human joy; and were every one to whom he did so to bring service to bring a blossom to his grave, he would sleep to-night beneath a wilderness of flowers.

"Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We wail, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; but in the light of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing.

"He who sleeps here, when dying, mistaking the approach of death for the return of health, whispered with his latest breath, 'I am better now.' Let us believe, in spite of doubts and dogmas, of fears and fears, that these dear words are true of all the countless dead.

"The record of a generous life runs like a vine around the memory of our dead, and every sweet, unselfish act is now a perfumed flower.

"And now, to you, who have been chosen from among the many

§ 3.

On the evening of November 13th, 1862, a banquet, Palmer House, Chicago, Ill., was given in response to the toast: "The volunteers of the Union army, whose valor and patriotism have won for the world 'a government of the people, and for the people.'" Among the guests (Sherman being toastmaster) were General Sherman, Woodford, Pope, Wilson, Vilas, and J. M. McKim. Therefore, the task of responding to the toast was one of unusual difficulty. Mr. Ingersoll's reputation as the first orator in America was such that the Indianapolis *Journal*, editorially, expected a distinguished audience to expect a wonderful display of oratory from him. He proved equal to the occasion, and delivered a speech of great force, eloquence, brilliancy, and power. His speech is both an oration and a poem. It is full of ideas, and sparkles with epigrammatic sentences. It is full of thoughts that burn. The closing sentences are like blank verse. It is wonderful.

EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE

and the Chicago *Inter-Ocean* observed, also editorially, that, when he "rose, \* \* \* a large part of the audience rose with him; and the cheering was as long and loud. Colonel Ingersoll may fairly be regarded as the foremost orator of America; and there was the keenest interest to hear him, after the brilliant speeches that had preceded. \* \* \* [He] had not proceeded far when the old fire broke out, and flashing metaphor, bold denunciation, and all the rich imagery and poetical beauty which mark his great efforts stood revealed before the delighted listeners. Long before the last word was uttered, all doubt as to the ability of the great orator to sustain himself had departed; and, rising on their feet, the audience cheered until the hall rang with shouts. Like Henry, 'the forest-brother of Demosthenes, whose thunder shook the Philippine Seas,' Ingersoll still held the crown within his grasp."

And why should he not have held it? That whether any other American had lived who could have made such a masterful address on such an occasion, is

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

"The North, filled with intelligence and wealth—marshaled her hosts and asked only for a leader. A man, silent, thoughtful, poised and calm, stepped forward. His lips of victory voiced the Nation's first and last conditional and immediate surrender.'" (xii 81)

*A man, silent, thoughtful, poised and calm*—in such a setting, is this a portrait of Grant? Or a blurred and faded tracing of some other man?

And when will this vine wither on the great liberator?—

"Lincoln, greatest of our mighty dead, whose name is as the summer air when reapers sing around the sheaves."  
\* \* \* ." (xii 83)

If all the rhetorics and all the rest were blotted out, where else than to Lincoln could we send the student for an example of a perfectly balanced hyperbole—the perfect patriotism?—

"Blood was water, money was leaves, and life was air until one flag floated over a Republic without a stain out a slave." (xii 83)

But shall this gem of tragedy and heroism be

## EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE

their lives; to all the living and to all the dead,—to Sherman, Sheridan, and to Grant, the laureled soldier of the world, and to Lincoln, whose loving life, like a bow of peace, spans and arches the clouds of war.” (xii 84)

### § 4.

During this year, Ingersoll also published *Sonnet to the Mistakes of Moses*, one of the ablest (and the longest) of his lectures, declaring that “the destroyer of weeds, thistles and thorns is a benefactor whether he soweth grain or not.”

On January 24th of the following year (1880) he delivered in Washington the *Suffrage Address*, a plea for universal suffrage and self-government for the District of Columbia.

He participated in the campaign of Garfield, addressing in Wall Street, New York, on October 18th, an assemblage which, according to the *New York Times*, words were “entirely inadequate to describe,” and which “never was equaled in point of numbers, respectability, or enthusiasm, even during the excitement caused by the outbreak of the Rebellion.”

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

exigency of the times could induce me to do it. I am not here to make a speech, but more especially to introduce an orator of the evening. \* \* \* I stand not as a man among men, pleading the cause of fellowship. We are not here as mechanics, as artists, men of letters, but as fellow-citizens. The gentleman who comes here is in no conventicle or church. He is not a representative of any sect or denomination, but a representative of all citizens, and I take the liberty of saying that I respect him as such, and for a full score and more of years have worked with him in the great, broad field of humanity, and for the cause of the oppressed. I consider it an honor to extend to him, as I do most men, my right hand of fellowship."

As Beecher spoke this sentence, Mr. Ingersoll rose and extended his hand, the two meeting with an audible clasp.

"I now introduce to you," continued the great orator, "a man who is leading the Great Agnostic forward, a man who is flatteringly—is the most brilliant speaker of the day among men on this globe. But as under the brightness of the sun we find the living coals of fire, under the brightness of the magnificent antithesis we find the glorious flame of thought. Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Ingersoll."

"The orator," continues the *Herald*, "spoke in his best vein, and his audience was spellbound by the wonderful magical spell of his

## EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE

r. Ingersoll, in turn, called upon the audience to give three cheers for the great preacher. They were given, and repeated three times over. Many waved their hats and umbrellas; ladies, of whom there were many hundreds present, waved their handkerchiefs; and men, strangers to each other, shook hands with the fervency of brotherhood. It was indeed a strange scene, and the principal actor in it seemed, not less than the most wildly excited man there, to appreciate its peculiar importance and significance."

Ingersoll's original anti-theological labors during this year were comprised in the publication of the lecture *What Must We Do To Be Saved?*

In 1881 came *Some Reasons Why* (a lecture) and *The Great Infidels* (also a lecture), which latter incensed clergymen, throughout the country, to renew their attacks upon the Great Agnostic. The lecture was posthumously published from unpublished "notes."

During the same year Ingersoll was requested

full and exact conditions were: (1) that I should write an article; (2) that someone should answer it; (3) that Ingersoll should have the privilege of replying; (4) that one or more others might answer him; and (5) that I should reply, thereby closing the matter. Accordingly, Ingersoll wrote the first article, titling it, *Is All of the Bible Inspired*. Afterwards did he know who was to answer it second. Many unsuccessful efforts were made by the *Review* to obtain a reply from some representative Christian theologian or thinker. Of those approached was Beecher, who, when he saw the proof-sheets of Ingersoll's article (as above indicated), declined to answer it. In substance, that, while he did not waver in his opinion of Ingersoll's methods, he agreed with his thought, that an answer from him would be useless. He advised the *Review* to secure a reply from some orthodox minister or college president. Afterwards, a letter was written by the late Judge Jeremiah S. Black of the Philadelphia bar. Ingersoll's



*EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE*

ent of that periodical, without Ingersoll's consent or knowledge, to change the title of the latter contribution. Ingersoll's rejoinder of fifty-eight pages, which, it is of literary interest to note, was dictated to a stenographer in an almost incredible short space of time, and published practically word for word as dictated, appeared in the November number of the *Review*; "and Judge Black was informed," wrote the editor afterwards, "that the same number of pages of the next issue would be at his disposal," "it being deemed inadvisable to fill any single number of 'the *Review* with the discussion of the one question." "But the Judge would not be induced," continued the editor, "to write a second article, although strongly urged to do so." This, Ingersoll deeply regretted. "Black published his reply in some Philadelphia paper," wrote Ingersoll, subsequently, "claiming that he had not been fairly treated by the *Review*." The latter then secured a "reply" from Professor George Mark Fisher, of Yale University, but only with the express stipulation, that Ingersoll be not permitted to rejoin.<sup>2</sup>

§ 6.

In viewing the lives of the great, we dwell with insistence upon such occasions which have already laid strong claim to position, while many others that, carefully examined, disclose the real mental and moral condition of the individual concerned are but slighted or mentioned, if not entirely ignored. We shall not excuse ourselves to this error in viewing the life of Ingersoll, if we failed to note, somewhat at length, an incident that took place in Washington, D. C., 8, 1882. It is doubtful whether there is any other incident which more clearly reveals his inner life and tenderness; and certainly there is no other which more clearly demonstrates his true character in a fitting expression.

A little child had suddenly died. The child was to parents who were far below Ingersoll's "social scale"; but they were his friends. The people who had been invited gathered at the open grave in the Congressional Cemetery. In the afternoon, he was there. The child was laid to rest. Not a word was said.

*EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE*

The undertaker, approaching the latter, addressed him in tones inaudible to others. The Great Apostle shook his head, but immediately inquired, "Does Mr. —— desire it?" The undertaker gave an affirmative nod, while from the stricken father came a look of earnest appeal—a look that meant more than he knew. It meant that the man who had led a regiment in battle, who had irresistibly swayed the most unwieldy of political conventions, who had captured countless juries, who had thrilled vast assemblages with the wildest enthusiasm—it meant that the man who was accustomed to being the dominant figure in affairs of such magnitude—was now called to perform the office the delicacy of which made it their direct antithesis. It meant, moreover, that the man who had done more than any other individual in history to destroy that which, to a vast majority of fellow-countrymen at least, was the only solace in the hour of death, was now called to solace the heart of a mother in the darkest moment of her life.

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

tree of life the buds and blossoms fall with ripeness on the common bed of earth, patriarchs and babes sleep.

"Why should we fear that which will come? We cannot tell, we do not know, which is the greater death. We cannot say that death is not a good, whether the grave is the end of this life, or the door to another. Whether the night here is not somewhere else a day, and we tell which is the more fortunate—the child dying in its mother's arms, before its lips have learned to form a word, or the man, after all the length of life's uneven road, painfully taking his last step with staff and crutch.

"Every cradle asks us 'Where?' and every grave answers. The poor barbarian, weeping alone his death, asks questions just as well as the robed priest of the most learned. The tearful ignorance of the one, is as confounding as the unmeaning words of the other. No man, standing at the close of a life has touched a grave, has any right to prophesy with pain and tears.

"May be that death gives all there is of worth to life. The press and strain within our arms could never die, if we were to wither from the earth. May be this is the purpose of the paths between our hearts—the way to life. And I had rather live and love while death is long, than live where love is not. Another life is sought, and another love again the ones who love us here.

"They who stand with breaking hearts around the dead need have no fear. The larger and the nobler faith is to be, tells us that death, even at its worst, is a good. We know that through the common wants of life—the duties of each hour—their grief will lessen day by day. This grave will be to them a place of rest and peace.

question: What other orator, ancient or modern, with one-half of Ingersoll's power in the rostrum, could have planted on the grave of a child a flower as delicate as this?

### § 7.

Dr. Talmage, of Brooklyn, having preached a series of six sermons in which he adversely reviewed some of the Great Agnostic's lectures, Ingersoll published, in April, 1882, *Six Interviews with Robert G. Ingersoll on Six Sermons by the Rev. DeWitt Talmage, D.D., To Which Is Added Talmagian Catechism*. Throughout this exhaustive work of 430 pages, Ingersoll pursues the great vine with kindly humor, but with logic as merciless as it is irresistible, and concludes by ironically setting forth, "in the form of a shorter catechism for use in Sunday-schools, the pith and marrow of what he [Talmage] has been pleased to say."

### § 8.

In this year, May Thirtieth must have been

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX*

The Grand Army of the Republic Ingersoll had "but one sentiment—Cheers for the living, tears for the dead." He also knew, that there was "but one sentiment—the intellectual amplitude, the historical wealth of imagination and feeling; in brain and heart—to lay upon the hall of the founders and defenders of the Republic a fitting wreath—Robert G. Ingersoll." Some of his enemies, that is, some people who did not know him, sought to prevent his being chosen as the orator of the occasion. Hearing of this, Ingersoll begged the committee in charge to elect him to the matter well and long. They did; and the longer they considered, the more necessary seemed the following telegram: "Our committee unanimously renewed its invitation, and urge your acceptance. All are enthusiastic on the subject. We want Rogers' sword of Bunker Hill." Ingersoll's reply was also brought over the wire this flash of lightning: "Glory hallelujah! The day is ours!"

The audience, which, within a few minutes

William Curtis, and many other prominent statesmen, soldiers, orators, and publicists being present. Received with an ardent ovation, Ingersoll sounded the very depths of his theme, while easily encompassed, and even transcended, its magnitude. Upon its sublimest heights fell the sunlight of his genius. From "the first ships whose masts were gilded by the western sun," he painted a poetic panorama the history of the Great Republic, until "the heavens bent above and domed the land without a serf, a servant, or a slave." To himself and others, his address was termed (and has since been published as) a *Decoration Day Oration*. This is a misnomer. It was far more than a mere "Decoration Day oration": it was an epic prose-poem. It was never equaled, even by Ingersoll himself, on any similar occasion. But its further consideration here is impossible. In the atmosphere of biography, there is no room or light for this angel of eloquence to spread his golden wings.<sup>1</sup>

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION

middle of the next, Ingersoll was the dominant figure in the most noted legal case that has occurred in the Western Hemisphere, and probably the most remarkable, for intricacy and magnitude in the history of criminal jurisprudence. Stephen W. Dorsey, formerly a United States senator from Arkansas, his brother John W. Dorsey, Thomas J. Brady (second assistant postmaster-general), and four others were indicted by a grand jury, at Washington, under the Revised Statutes of the United States, for conspiring to defraud the latter in connection with certain contracts and subcontracts for carrying the mails in a number of the western states, on what were known as "star routes." The two trials that ensued were known as the "star-route trials." There were over ten thousand of these star-routes. The defendants were interested in 134 separate contracts and subcontracts; and it was alleged that the Government had been defrauded to the extent of nearly five million dollars. Considering the size of this sum of public money, and the social and official prominence of some of the defendants, I feel safe in



## *EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE*

the costs involved. The former, as printed and filed in the Department of Justice, occupy between nine and ten thousand roomy pages,—probably the longest records in the annals of criminal procedure,—while the costs have been officially estimated at \$200,000.

The first trial began on June 1st, in the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia, Attorney-General Brewster and others representing the Government; Ingersoll and others, the defendants. Ingersoll was the immediate counsel for Stephen W. and John W. Dorsey. The trial occupied nearly three and one-half months. At the unanimous request of his legal associates in the case, Ingersoll made the final appeal to the jury, for the defense, beginning at noon on September 5th, and ending at noon on the 6th. As large an audience as he was able to get within range of his voice hung upon his every word. The jury retired on September 8th, and, on the 11th, after being threatened by the presiding judge, with an invocation of the provisions of the ancient common law in such cases,—namely, deprivation of food, drink and place

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION

Meantime, public interest in the case was even more intense than ever. Thousands of citizens of every grade and vocation, including editors of influential journals, in all parts of the country, who certainly had never perused the indictment, and who probably had never heard or read a full page of the real testimony, were incessantly clamoring for a verdict of guilt.

In this connection, the following extract from subsequent interview with Ingersoll is especially apropos:—

“Question.—In your experience as a lawyer what was the most unique case in which you were ever engaged?”

“Answer.—The Star Route trial. Every paper in the country, but one, was against the defense, and that one was a little sheet owned by one of the defendants. I received a note from a man living in a little town in Ohio criticising me for defending the accused. In reply I wrote that I supposed he was a sensible man and that he, of course, knew what he was talking about when he said the accused were guilty; that the Government needed just such men as he, and that he should come to the trial at once and testify. The man wrote back: ‘Dear Colonel: I am a ~~very~~ fool.’” (viii 340)

In legal and governmental circles at Washington, the wildest excitement prevailed. There were

## *EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE*

It is no exaggeration to state, that this verdict was the greatest personal victory ever won by an American lawyer. It was so regarded at the time. Hundreds who were present to hear it, while apparently feeling but little anxiety for the actual defendants, were beside themselves with joy in learning that Ingersoll, despite the seeming overwhelming advantage of the prosecution, had achieved so marvelous a triumph. Indeed, even the dignity of court was impotent to prevent homage to the great lawyer. And shortly afterwards, as he rode homeward with his family through Pennsylvania Avenue, he was so frequently greeted by the people, that he was finally obliged to sit with uncovered head, waving his hands to either side, much after the manner of a conquering hero. Telegrams of congratulation came from all parts of the country. Callers, in an almost unbroken procession, thronged his house during the day, and concluded their manifestation of gladness with a serenade in the evening, which Ingersoll responded in a short speech.

Of the matter and manner of his three addresses

the addresses concerned. To point out of the countless available examples of exposition; of analysis and portrayal of character and motive; of perfect logic and flashing repartee; of scathing and dealing sarcasm; of genial humor and—in short, to do more than to enumerate the weapons wielded by the supreme intellect in this memorable combat—would be to a temptation that constantly beset the appreciative critic of Ingersoll. It is pertinent, however, that many people, from their superficial knowledge of him, judge of his depth as a counselor and advocate from court with the ineradicable conviction of the man whom they had long since counted the most eloquent of American orators. He was less marvelous for his resourcefulness and liancy, and his profundity, in the law.

Notwithstanding the verdict (on June 10) of the twelve men who had pondered the evidence and the testimony, and who were sworn to render a decision in accordance with the law, and the law was in his favor.





*EIGHTEEN SEVENTY-EIGHT TO EIGHTY-FIVE*

They also charge Ingersoll with having been swindling to one of the "guilty" defendants, in consideration of an enormous fee. Ingersoll received no fee whatever. As a matter of fact, he lost not only the better part of two years' time and intellectual labor, but many thousands of dollars cash, through the failure of Stephen W. Dorsey to meet various financial obligations which he assumed during, and subsequent to, the trials, and for which Ingersoll, by sufferance of abundant good nature, became technically responsible. Such was his reward.—

"Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back,  
Wherein he puts alms for oblivion,—  
A great-sized monster of ingritudes—  
Those scraps are good deeds past; which are devoured  
As fast as they are made, forgot as soon  
As done \* \* \* ."

§ 10.

But if ingratitude, and even worse, was to be Ingersoll's portion at the hands of one individual in his own country, something different was preparin

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION

Between Van Wilczek Valley and old Fort Selkirk in British Northwest Territory, at a point which he thought was situated in the bed of an ancient lake, he came upon a large chain, or cluster, of islands. These he named "Ingersoll Islands," "after Colonel Ingersoll of Washington."

### § II.

On October 22d Ingersoll delivered in Lincoln Hall, in the latter city, a speech on "Civil Rights," a great number of citizens having met there to express their views concerning the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in which it is held that the first and second sections of the *Civil Rights Act* are unconstitutional. He was introduced by Frederick Douglass, as "one that loved his fellow-men," Leigh Hunt's famous poem *About Ben Adhem*, whom Ingersoll was held to typify, being employed by Douglass as the medium of presenting the humanitarian, orator and jurist.

Thereupon Ingersoll, the legal anatomist, with the scalpel and tweezers of logic, slowly and calmly



o, should be remembered as an "expounder of the Constitution."

There was also published during this year, in the *Brooklyn Union*, a lengthy interview in which Gersoll criticized the Brooklyn divines for their attitude on the tendencies of modern thought.

Two lectures, *Orthodoxy* and *Which Way?* were delivered in 1884, the last concluding with the marvelous peroration:—

"This was.

"This is.

"This shall be."

The latter has since been published as *Night and Morning*, with other prose-poems and selections from his works.

*Myth and Miracle* was published in 1885. One of his most forceful and charming lectures, it contains the prose-poems *The Warp and Woof* and *The Apostrophe to Liberty*.

## *INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION*

that he should abandon the national capital for the far wider and more congenial fields of the national metropolis. Natural, to be sure; yet, seemingly how anomalous—the “Great Agnostic” returning to the place of his baptism! How far from the imagination of fifty years before! Little was dreamed by that mother whose “sweet, cold face” was to keep his “heart warm through all the changing years.” Still less was it dreamed by Rev. John Ingersoll. How distant from his thoughts, as he set out to spread the Christian gospel in the “West,” that the motherless child in his arms, born to poverty, adversity, and all that was provincially orthodox, would return, a half-century hence, the central figure of an epoch of intellectual progress—the most unique, and yet the most lovable personality, the wisest and sanest thinker, the most formidable controversialist, of the modern world, and the greatest orator of all time!

## CHAPTER VI.

### *FROM EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-EIGHT*

NGERSOLL was now in his fifty-third year, when a large majority of geniuses have long since done the most and the best of their work. He stirred almost at the dawn, arduously toiling and already producing in the morning, and achieving his greatest before the sun was overhead, then he rested in the calm of the afternoon,—if indeed the night have not too early touched with cooling mists their tired brow. This is the rule. But Nature delights in exceptions. Why we do not know. It may be that she tires of uniformity, of the ceaselessness and invariability of forces, of the inevitableness of atoms and molecules—tires of the

INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRE

intellectually or artistically comparable to this may be termed the exception of his life. He did not reach the sublimest heights of his art until he was forty-two years of age; and he did not cease to produce things that were both intellectually and artistically comparable to his best work until his death: these may be termed the exceptions of his maturity,—exceptions far more numerous than either of the others. For, in many respects, both the quantity and the quality of his work. Considered, his accomplishments during the last fifteen years of his life were greater than during the preceding twenty. During the four years referred to, he sustained undiminished his intellectual wealth and exuberance, dowering the field with the profoundest, sublimest, and tenderest productions, producing many of his most powerful and, at fifty-eight, his greatest literary masterpiece, *Shakespeare*,—a literary masterpiece, its being a lecture. Moreover, he did what had never been done before—entered the mental arena against the ablest and most daring literary knights-errant of Christendom, finally

## *EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-EIGHT*

ature made many exceptions with Ingersoll; and has been written elsewhere, by an eminent critic, that Ingersoll "was not as other men are." Not only is the latter true in general; it is true in numerous particulars. And had this critic deigned the Great Agnostic entry into the jealously guarded precincts of conventional letters, he certainly would have written thus: "Ingersoll was not as other literary men are." For whatever Ingersoll felt, Ingersoll could think and write—anywhere. He did not require seclusion, nor even retirement. He never sought the sequestration of the study, nor ever became a literary convict. He was universally opposed to the penitentiary idea. Instead, he put the idea of social intercourse, in company. Unless some other than mere literary considerations prevented, he wrote while in the bosom of his family. Many of his productions were written while the conversation of others was in his ears, or while his children were playing about him with toys and pets, the rabbits and kittens actually capering over his manuscripts.

literature, none is either more typical or more interesting than the following. On December 18, 1889, he was traveling, by rail, from New York to Washington, where he was to lecture. He stepped into the 'smoker,' 'Clint,' he said, and was introduced to his brother-in-law, Mr. Charles Farrell, a constant companion. As the train moved on, the two were reseated, Ingersoll took from his pocket some old envelopes or bits of paper and began to write. After continuing to write interruptedly for a considerable time, he handed a rough manuscript to Mr. Farrell and said, "Do you think that will do for 'Harry'?" "It will do for 'Harry,'" he replied. "Yes: it will do for 'Harry'"—it would do for posterity. This was the *Life*, the greatest prose-poem, and the greatest poem in any form, that has ever been written by an American. It was a laurel wreath on Shakespeare's brow—a priceless gem whose value could only dim. The production was first published in the Christmas number of the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, the editor, Gray Fiske, being

## *EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-EIGHT*

him to the gratitude and affection, not only of every genuine American,—every enlightened lover of the sacred principles upon which the Republic rests,—but of every other real friend of physical and mental liberty.

During the summer of 1886, Mr. Charles Reynolds arranged an itinerary with a view to delivering rationalistic lectures, or of holding free thought meetings, at various places in New Jersey. His invitations to the public were extended through the usual media of newspapers, circulars, posters, and so forth; and the resultant meetings, attended by some of the best citizens, were peaceful, orderly, and respectable, when, indeed, they were not rendered otherwise by a minor element of bigotry and bigotry, unrestrained by local officials. Mr. Reynolds encountered no great difficulty from that source, however, until he reached Boonton, where, while speaking,—while peacefully availing himself of the very first rights of an American citizen,—his tent was besieged and destroyed by mob; he was personally attacked, with all kinds of missiles: and he undoubtedly would have seen

blessed with ample precaution, if more, "the issue was never joined after, but before the excitement subsided, Mr. Reynolds appeared in a few miles distant, and, without attending meetings, distributed some copies of the paper, appending thereto a satirical cartoon of his own experience in Boonton. A number of copies from that place were instantly on their way, with the result that the grand jury, under the "blue laws," found two indictments, one for "blasphemy" in Boonton, and one for "blasphemy" in Morristown. Only thirty miles from the metropolis, and only thirteen years from the twelfth century, on the very ground where Whitman sang of democracy, a citizen of the age was to be tried for "blasphemy"! But no indictment had been found. The law was the serpent, it had lain in lethargy for many years, beneath both the old and the new institutions of New Jersey; and, should a similar occasion result, it could uncoil and strike.



*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-*

verdict, not merely for Charles B. Rey for any citizen of New Jersey, nor yet citizen of the United States, but for all. The personal interests of the defendant, the public feeling, the legal aspects of the uniqueness—the only one of its kind even in New Jersey, and the only one that had in the United States in over fifty years—must be shut out of mind, if we would appreciate Ingersoll's effort. It transcends and outreaches the merely local, the provincial, the ephemeral. If one of the gods of Olympus were on trial, it would make a fitting defense for him in all place and all time—a symphony of praise in the star-lit cathedral of the universe. I will listen, in passing, to some of its celestial harmonies:—

“The most important thing in this world is liberty. Liberty is more important than food or clothes—more important than gold and lands—more important than art or science—more important than all religions, is the liberty of man. \* \* \* Gladly would I sacrifice the splendors of the nineteenth century—gladly would I forego the invention that has leaped from the brain of man—gladly would I see all books ashes, all works of art destroyed, all statues

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION*

may be worship here to-morrow, and yet that no man can blaspheme a book or the author of that, in short, theological blasphemy is an impossibility,—an unreal crime,—he inquired.

“What is real blasphemy?”

And he replies:—

“To live on the unpaid labor of other men—that is blasphemy.

“To enslave your fellow-man, to put chains upon his body—that is blasphemy.

“To enslave the minds of men, to put manacles upon their mouths, to put padlocks upon the lips—that is blasphemy.

“To deny what you believe to be true, to admit to be true what you believe to be a lie—that is blasphemy.

“To strike the weak and unprotected, in order to gain the applause of the ignorant and superstitious multitude—that is blasphemy.

“To persecute the intelligent few, at the command of the many—that is blasphemy.

“To forge chains, to build dungeons, for your honest fellow-men—that is blasphemy.

“To pollute the souls of children with the dogma of eternal damnation—that is blasphemy.

“To violate your conscience—that is blasphemy.”

It would take us too far across the boundary of biography to quote any more of the beautiful

*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-*

the penetrating and luminous logic, the lightnings of wit and the sun-glints of humor lie between Ingersoll's characteristic "of the Jury" and his final ardent homily which will never again be necessary to stand in the temple of justice "and plead for the Speech."

At the conclusion of Ingersoll's address the court adjourned for luncheon. During the adjournment, many of the people who had been present came to the speaker crowded around him and expressing their agreement with what he had said. Among them was the son of a minister of the place. When the court reconvened, Ingersoll joined in a conference with the three judges as to the case; and, in connection with the matter, while the jury were deliberating, he told the judges what the people had said and he added: "You better discharge Reynold's appeal and try the case again and convince the whole town."

It redounds none the less to Ingersoll's credit that the jury, sitting honor-bound in the presence of a law which they could not evade, rendered

the fine, twenty-five dollars, with c  
in all to seventy-five dollars, wa  
that his services were gratuitous;  
in Morristown, in connection with  
fused an offer of a thousand dollars  
elsewhere, for a few hours, to anot

§ 4.

Many admirers of Ingersoll's i  
must often have wished, that, in  
to his genius the place which they  
it merits, a comparison of at least  
ductions with those of his disting  
poraries, on the same theme, might  
author confesses that he has experie  
and that the task involved might hav  
in the present work had he not disc  
task had already been performed.  
consciously, the comparison desired  
effected by Mr. Edward W. Bok,  
death of Beecher, in 1887, request  
friends to contribute to a volume  
Among the many duties which

*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-*

common theme ; and it would be as obvious to present examples of the style and the any particular one of them. It is fair to ever, that no one who has not read the m Beecher can justly appreciate the absolute ness and the comparative loftiness, both a intellectual, with which Ingersoll approached subject before him. In his entire tri longest in the volume,—not an act nor an and only one date, in the life of the prea year of his birth,—is specifically mentioned yet that tribute presents to the gaze of a world a clear, comprehensive, ample view Ward Beecher. It reveals the psychology of the famous divine, from his cradle ritan penitentiary,” until he became “the orator that stood within the pulpit’s narrow It does far more : it is an analysis, a sy characterization, a eulogy. It is the most the most beautiful, the most fitting wreath ever been placed by intellectual hospital tomb of a fallen hero of a rejected faith. other tributes, it will of course be read

§ 5.

Through the efforts of Mr. Allen Rice, who was the editor of the *North American Review*, and who enjoyed a wide acquaintance with the leading men of his day, Ingersoll, during this year, the champion of Rationalism, became the most memorable religious controversy of the century. It was the most memorable because of the eminence of those taking part, because of scope and profundity of argument. Indeed, it would be difficult to name another controversy by reason of intellectual attainments and wide recognition, could have brought into discussion of the comparative merits of Christianity and Rationalism greater dignity and authority than the men who, seemingly unmindful of the fatigues of their predecessors, matched abilities with Ingersoll in 1888.

This memorable intellectual tourney, which may be properly termed the Field-Gladstone-Ingersoll Controversy, began in the *American Review* for August, 1887, with

*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-*

the last word with every antagonist, in but the last word in the controversy.

As a later chapter will present Ingersoll of the "fundamental truths of Christ" would be not only impracticable, but supererogation, to indicate here the attitude assumed toward those "truths," in the discussion just mentioned. As to the outcome of the latter, there is, similarly, as much as there is space for dilation. It can be said ever, alike with fitting brevity and truthfulness, the sincere wish of every one who is aware of the soundness of Rationalism, in general, and Ingersoll's controversial supremacy, in particular, and who is familiar with this truly grand controversy, that all may read, with impartial candor, its two sides. That such is the wish of the most solicitous friends of Ingersoll, not of those of Field, Gladstone, and Mill, is evident in the fact that both sides of the controversy were long since published, in the authorized edition of Ingersoll's works.<sup>1</sup>

§ 6.

When, on the death of Roscoe Conkling, the people of the Empire State resolved a fitting tribute to one of her favorite sons, Ingersoll was unanimously invited, by a joint

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illustrate which he worked his two hands together as if to crush an imagined burden—"Yes, crush him, much as a cat would till there's no life left to fool with." *With Walt Whitman.* By Horace Traubel. Pp. 69 and 81.

In the same connection, Professor Huxley wrote as follows:

"4 MARLBOROUGH PLACE, ABBEY ROAD,

LONDON, March, 1889. [?]

"DEAR COLONEL INGERSOLL:

"Some unknown benefactor has sent me a series of numbers of the *North American Review* containing your battles with 'The People of Bashan' in 1888—and the very kindly and appreciative notice of last April about my pleader work over here [*'Professor Agnosticism,'* April, 1889].

"I write mainly to thank you for it and to say that I have taken to heart your admonition to Harrison and myself to leave our quarrels with one another and to join forces against the common enemy. I have no excuse of 'Please, sir, it was the other boy began,' to make good, but really if you will look at Harrison's article again, I think you will see there was no help for it.

"However, he is far too good a man to quarrel with for ever. I have hope we shall arrive at a treaty of peace and even before long. In the meanwhile, I am glad to say that we are still excellent friends.



## *EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-EIGHT*

committee, to exercise again those powers which have contributed so much to his reputation as the greatest of orators. Himself an intimate friend and ardent admirer of the dead statesman, Ingalls gave hearty acceptance. His tribute was delivered at Albany, on the evening of May 9th, the occasion being a joint session of the legislature. The building in which the session was held was taxed to its utmost capacity of seating 500, more than 2,000 being turned away.

Those who read the tribute to Conkling with the expectation of finding a catalogue of his achievements, or a copy of his life's itinerary, will meet with the same disappointment as those who read with like expectation the tribute to Beecher. But those who read either with the presupposition that specific treatment of act and incident affords the

---

(forget the name) has been charging me with 'British insolence to the people of the United States for my remarks about Mormonism. 'All people in the world, I should say I am the last to be fairly accused of want of respect for America or Americans, and, beyond a little old railery, I cannot discover where I have sinned.

"But I expect it is only Christian zeal under the mask of patriotism."

"I have now finished work for the present and am off to Switzerland."

truer and nobler portrait will come from the knowledge. Ingersoll was not a physiologist or anatomist—he was an artist. As we look at a master you behold the simple grandeur of the familiar mountain range. By Ingersoll you behold, unburdened of its tail, the majestic form of a Beecher.

Endeavoring to realize in few words the fullness of his grace and adequacy in the present, it is impossible to omit his introduction. Listen as to a Wagnerian prelude :

“Roscoe Conkling—a great man, an orator, a distinguished citizen of the Republic, in the prime of power has reached his journey’s end, and we are gathered here, of his birth, to pay our tribute to his worth and his and held a proud position in the public thought for independence, for courage, and above all for idealism. His name was known and honored by many nations.”

(xii 427)

Add to this a few of those epigrammatic characterizations of which Ingersoll was a master, and we have a perfect portrait of Conkling. What, for example, could more fittingly describe the latter’s stand-

## *EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-EIGHT*

following sentence prophesies for such as Congress will not fall, in full measure, to Ingersoll himself?—

“When real history shall be written by the truthful and the wise these men, these kneelers at the shrines of chance and fraud, the fallen idols worshiped once as gods, will be the very food of scorn while those who bore the burden of defeat, who earned and kept their self-respect, who would not bow to man or men for place or power will wear upon their brows the laurel mingled with the oak.” (p. 10)

As an example of the fine, nobly eulogistic tone that pervades the entire tribute, nothing could be better than the following, on the imperious record of the dead statesman :—

“Above his marvelous intellectual gifts—above all place he reached,—above the ermine he refused,—rises his integrity like some great mountain peak—and there it stands, firm as the earth beneath, pure as the stars above.” (xii 435)

If, as I trust, the reader shall have derived from the preceding an adequate impression of the rhetorical quality of the tribute, as thus far considered, then, and then only, will he be able justly to appreciate the majestic beauty and grandeur

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRI*

horizon, beyond the twilight's purple hills, beyond the human harm or help—to that vast realm of solemnity, the innumerable dwell, and he has left with us his work and deed—the memory of a brave, unflinching, honest man alone to death." (xii 437)

With this conclusion, ex-Speaker General and Senator Coggeshall, respectively, seconded that the legislature tender to vote of thanks for an oration which, "in style, in poetic expression, in cogency of argument, and in brilliancy of rhetoric," "unrivalled among the eulogies of either modern days. As effective as Demosthenes, as polished as Cicero, as ornate as Burke, as Gladstone, the orator of the evening has eclipsed himself." "The orator given with the same rare sense which he displayed in the invitation to deliver the tribute.

As an oratorical feat the latter received a higher credit on its author when we consider that at the time of its production, the Field-Manning-Ingersoll Controversy was in its height, that, on the night previous to the delivery of the tribute, Ingersoll was engaged in a pub-

*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-SIX TO EIGHTY-*

and that he was doubtless contemplating  
*ration Day Oration* which he was shortly  
in New York, and which, by the way,  
be second only, in power and beauty, to  
oration of 1882.

---

should imagine, this way—shuts his eyes : as easily  
them right and left with the movement of his arm.

*Whitman in Camden*, by Horace Traubel, p. 129.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *FROM EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE EIGHTEEN NINETY TWO*

**I**N 1889, the Rationalists of Europe and America having conjointly provided for the erection of a life-size statue of Bruno, in the Camp of Marston at Rome, on the spot where he was burnt at stake, February 17, 1600, by order of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, Ingersoll was invited by the international committee to deliver the oration unveiling the memorial mentioned.

We can imagine with what wealth of thought and what triumphant inspiration, the oration of universal liberty would have risen in the presence of the Pope at the Vatican to pay to the memory of him who had already styled "the first real martyr" the debt of gratitude and historic justice which he

*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO*

ained had he accepted, we catch a glimpse from the critical viewpoint of the eminent English Rationalist George Jacob Holyoake, who, in commenting on the great orator's loftiness and originality said :—

“ When his subject was Bruno, upon whom many men had exhausted all the terms they knew, Ingersoll's first words were: ‘ The night of the Middle Ages lasted for a thousand years. The first star that enriched the horizon of this universal gloom was Giordano Bruno. He was the herald of the dawn.’ ”

But although the orator of the better age which Bruno so clearly foresaw, and for which he so nobly gave his life, was unable to pay in Rome the tribute of his gratitude, he rendered substantial aid to Rome, not only as the head of the committee representing the United States on the international committee, but as indicated in the following characteristic letter opening the American subscription :—

## § 2.

In 1891 he first delivered his lecture on Shakespeare. The several mental steps in his marvelous contribution to Shakespeare are of keen interest. They are all of importance, because they afford an independent, partial, view of the artistic and intellectual evolution of a great personality.

The circumstances of Ingersoll's lecture on Shakespeare's "book and volume" and the impression which the lecture made on the prose-poet whom the future will rank as one of its authors, were as unusual as the lecture itself. The introduction to the poetry of Burns, which may be recalled, that, in the late forties and fifties, the works of Burns and Scott were not to be found in every American library, certainly not in the home of every orthodox in the Prairie State. The work of Burns were considered hardly "safe for the young," as was admitted, on all hands," says Ingersoll himself, in reference to the literary



## *EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY*

of Ingersoll's growing impatience with P. he once termed a "word-carpenter," and the lines themselves, the story of Inge coming one of the "worshipers" just are best told in the following paragraph:

"\* \* \* one night I stopped at a little hotel in years ago, when we were not quite civilized, when the red man were still in the prairies. While I was supper an old man was reading from a book, and among were listening was myself. I was filled with wonder. heard anything like it. I was ashamed to ask him what ing; I supposed that an intelligent boy ought to know. and when the little bell rang for supper I hung back a out. I picked up the book; it was Sam Johnson's edition speare. The next day I bought a copy for four dollars more than the national debt. You talk about the press the Treasury [1895]! For days, for nights, for months read those books, two volumes, and I commenced with tion. I haven't read that introduction for nearly fifty y forty-five, but I remember it still. Other writers are diligently planted and watered, but Shakespeare a forest oaks and elms toss their branches to the storm, where the where the vine bursts into blossom at its foot. That book me a new world, another nature. While Burns was there was a range of mountains with thousands of such valleys was as sweet a star as ever rose into the horizon, here filled with constellations. That book has been a source joy to me from that day to this: and whenever I read

concerning Ingersoll: "He could be 'Shakespeare' than any other person ever known." Actors like Edwin Booth, Barrett, and Joseph Jefferson went so far as they having repeatedly remarked, for Ingersoll would have made 'a wonderful *Lear*.' And it was because of the force in such comments—it was because the "minded" had penetrated to, and awakened in, the innermost depths of Ingersoll's soul—that, for many years, the little unconquerable reluctance to attempt in a single lecture, to a theme so symmetrical, exacting, and intellectually so much, how much of its debt of gratitude to the great republic of English letters, the little republic which consisted of his own and other relatives and friends, Ingersoll was the central figure, his final success in overcoming, in a reluctant, we cannot say. But it is clear that it has been at least in accord with their suggestion of his immediate family.

## *EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO*

the same reluctance, if less intense, still rose in his consciousness of the unattainable grandeur of his subject; and he was impelled to say:—

"Shakespeare is too great a theme. I feel as though endeavor to grasp a globe so large that the hand obtains no hold. He who would worthily speak of the great dramatist should be inspired by a use of fire that should ascend the brightest heaven of invention. He should have 'a kingdom for a stage, and monarchs to behold a swelling scene.'" (iii 4)

Concerning the production of which this extra is a part, and from which I shall quote in a later chapter, it can only be added here that Ingersoll scornfully rejected the Baconian theory and placed Shakespeare at the artistic and intellectual summit of the human race.

### § 3.

During this year, the Davis will case, in which Ingersoll had been retained as counsel for the contestants, and which came to a final trial at Butte, Mont., in September, received a considerable share of his attention. This fact, however, despite the financial importance of the case and its inter-

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRE*

quence over two continents and in the the sea. "The matchless eloquence of I was the graphic exclamation of one of the of the press who had heard the former's the jury; and he continued: "When look for the like of it? What other has the faculty of blending wit and humor and fact and logic with such exquisit with such impressive force? \* \* \* To audience, at least, Demosthenes on would seem a pretty poor sort of affair of Ingersoll on the Davis will."

But the address is even more remarkable seems to me, as evidence of Ingersoll's. Indeed, those who read it will be slow to that its author was the same Ingersoll thus far appeared in these pages. Its inductions; its astute, sleuthlike disanalysis of motive, and corresponding conduct; its confutations and confound chemical and chirographical experts; its rise on the ladder of logic, from the fact to the dome of conclusion, using

*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO*

and arched with a radiance that can never fail to  
de the grave of a little child.

In this case, which involved the disposition  
any millions of dollars, it was sought by the  
ounsel for the proponent, John A. Davis, to show  
among other things, that a certain will was genuine  
that it was written by Job Davis, who was known  
and acknowledged to have been a good penman,  
correct speller, an excellent scholar. Ingersoll  
ounsel for the contestants, believed and sought  
now, on the other hand, that the will in question  
was not genuine, was not written by Job Davis,  
but was forged by James R. Eddy, who was known  
and acknowledged to be a poor penman, an incor-  
rect speller, an ignorant man.

Referring to the proponent's testimony that the  
will was written by Job Davis, Ingersoll said:—

"There is this beautiful peculiarity in nature—a lie never fits a fact  
ever. You only fit a lie with another lie, made for the express pur-  
pose, because you can change a lie but you can't change a fact, and  
after a while the time comes when the last lie you tell has to be fitted  
to a fact, and right there is a bad joint; consequently you must treat  
the statements of people who say they saw, not by what they say but  
by other facts, by the surroundings, by what are called probabilities.

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL A

us be honest about it. How delighted they were that he was an ignorant boob. But then witnesses both swear that he was the best speller and when they brought men from other courts to match, after all had fallen on the field, after with dead and wounded, Job Davis stood unmissed a word." (x 538)

After making many other telling the fact that the will contained evidence of ignorant authorship, he continued:

"There are twenty words misspelled in the most common words, some of them, in the Targ. I say that these twenty misspelled words are twenty witnesses that tell the truth without help that you cannot mix by cross-examination. Every misspelled word holds up its name and swears that Job Davis did not write that will. Witnesses had sworn that Judge Woolworth was many Salt Creekers do you think it would take he was around spelling sheet 'sheet'?" (x 540)

Here Judge Woolworth, seeking orthographic crime, interrupted with:

"I have done worse than that times."

Whereupon Ingersoll, as quick



## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL

strike just the three places where there had been  
and a little spatter of the ink? Take up your  
figure away until you are blind, and such an  
in as many thousand, billion, trillion, quint  
express by figures." (x 550)

And again the same quality  
wit:—

"Professor Elwell accounts for all the dirt  
tion, all on one side and made by the thumb  
four fingers under it at the same time, the  
they wouldn't perspire. This left the thumb  
I need not call him a professor of perspira  
light on the subject \* \* \*." (x 541)

The last sentence is typical of I  
procedure. He excluded all "th  
on the subject." He could afford  
soll the lawyer believed that it w  
whether prosecuting or defending  
other lawyer, but to enlighten b  
the jury upon the testimony, ju  
rationalistic reformer believed th  
to enlighten the great jury of th  
testimony presented by theology  
this very case, he had said:



## EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO

and they were, even with the great soul who had thus spoken; for this was on September 5, 1891. Although the jury failed to agree, thus compromising the case, Ingersoll left the scene of forensic battle with the verdict of the people in his favor, and without compromising with his conscience; and this was worth more to him than complete victory in the Davis will case, with the Davis millions added.

He was in Helena during the early part of the preceding February, when a committee of the state legislature waited upon and informed him that Aaron C. Witter, the recently elected speaker of the House, and a representative from Beaverhead county, had died, leaving penniless two little girls who would have been in good circumstances but for their parents' charity to others. The committee requested Ingersoll to lecture for the benefit of the two orphans. He responded with that heartiness which had already passed into tradition. The competition of *Shakespeare* netted \$1,165, Ingersoll purchasing a number of tickets for his own lecture. *The Helena Daily Herald* of February 7, 1890

of the human race,' says Colonel Ingersoll. 'A greater immortal Shakespeare. 'A greater Shakespeare is his panegyrist,' says a citizen of New York at the Ingersoll lecture last night."

§ 4.

During an interview which was published in the *The Sunday Union*, of New Haven, April 10, 1881, Ingersoll was asked the following question:—

"Is it a fact that there are thousands of men in the country whom you would not discuss in fair debate?"

He replied, among other things:—

"No; the fact is I would like to discuss them all in one."

*A Christmas Sermon* by Ingersoll, written in 1878, and containing a full and complete statement of the Christian doctrine of the atonement, and indorsing the human, instead of the divine, side of Christmas, which he declared to be a relic from the pagan world, was published in the *New York Evening Telegram* of December 25, 1878. This *Sermon* of less than five hundred words, and of less than five minutes' length, has been published in many forms, and has been translated into many languages.

## EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO

the camp-fires of the enemy. Not so with the *Christmas Sermon*. This was attacked with great violence by the New York *Christian Advocate*, the editor of which called upon the public to boycott the *Evening Telegram*. In doing this, it was necessary for the *Advocate* to republish at least the substance of the *Sermon* which, consequently, was read beside thousands of Christian hearts, whereas it never would have reached through the medium of the *Telegram*. The latter, stung by such effrontery,—by such a travesty of the freedom of the press,—promptly dared the *Advocate* to its worst, and published, at the same time, an answer from Ingersoll—an answer which, again, like Paine's *Crisis*, “echoed throughout America.” The excitement produced by the resulting battle between the brilliant orator and the distinguished champions of Christianity who undertook to silence him has not been equalled in the history of modern religious controversy. Thousands of newspapers, hundred of pulpits, and scores of societies have taken up the challenge to Christianity thrown down by Colonel Ingersoll.” The

Before the close of this conflict, fire called forth from the Great Agnostic, though lengthy, being remarkable for conciseness, as he was obliged to contribute his replies to many participants. Ingersoll was indebted to the clerical help he received to realize his ideal of expression ten years before. He had "in one"; and he was content to have justice determine the result.

§ 5.

Although Ingersoll was far from either a literary or an oratorical writer, the remainder of 1892, and although many profound, lofty, and beautiful single production of the period, it is that an oratorical production, arrested here. It does so, not because it withal the supreme creation of the year, because it contains passages that are, to those of his finer utterances of but because the nature of its subject-

## *EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO*

measure many of the qualities that have rendered the name of Ingersoll an inspiration and a precious memory to millions of his fellows. Certainly notwithstanding the wide dissimilarities often existing between the great could account for the inseverable bond that united the hearts of the "Great Agnostic" and the "Good Grey Poet." Nor could their mutual affection scarcely be explained on the ground of intellectual or logical similitude. The truth was that each admired and loved the other, not so much for his genius, however highly that was prized, but primarily—chiefly—for his manhood. The former, although undoubtedly both artistic and intellectual, was yet far more ethical in character—humanitarian, in the widest, noblest sense.

To Whitman, Ingersoll was not only the idealator, but (to quote Whitman's own words) "a man whose importance to the time could not be overestimated: not literal importance, not argumentative importance, not anti-theological-Republican-paraphrase importance: but spiritual importance—importance as a force, as consuming energy—a fiery blast from a new virtue which are only the old virtues

spontaneous men on the planet." "deeper than he is supposed to be," remarked the poet, elsewhere; and "We get lots of deep-sea fruit out again: "America don't know to-day ought to be of Ingersoll." "

To the latter, likewise, Whitman an iconoclast in art and intellect, but—a genuine man,—the embodiment of moral force. He was not simply a great the poet of individuality, of liberty—the mastersinger of the Great astronomic scope; his dynamic passion; his boundless charity and brotherly love; his emotion never measured, but charged with harmonies that lave the human soul as the waves of the ocean wash the desolate shore; his majestic poise and scorn for the "literary Lilliputians" and their iconoclastic forms and methods in literature. Ingersoll lovingly praised and ardently

But, unreservedly loyal as was this he was even more steadfast

*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO*

ill buoyant with health and life, was to the venerable poet as an attentive and affectionate son. In any hour of need the orator could not be nearer sustain and reassure with his magnetic presence than the aged poet, some inimitable word of love and cheer would come in stead. When, for example, on May 31, 1889, Camden paid its "compliment" to him who was known and loved of all,—however high, however low,—Ingersoll telegraphed from New York: "Am confined to my house by illness and regret that I can't be with you to-day. Give my more than regards to Walt Whitman, who has won such a splendid victory over the 'granite-headed' of the world. He is a genuine continental American." Not only the poet himself, but his friends, fared far better on the corresponding date of the next year,—his seventieth birthday; for "Ingersoll got over" and, at dinner at Reisser's, in Philadelphia, "improvised" across the table to Whitman for fifty-five minutes in a speech which Whitman thought the most consummate piece of oratory he had ever enjoyed."

But this oratorical standard of the "Poet" was not long to endure; 21st, less than five months later, the same orator with a far wider scope and more inspiring conditions, conditions, over, would again make him, of all men, the most deeply concerned.

For, although imbued with respect and tenderest reverence, for the hope and recognition for all in another, he believed that the individual's qualities, and especially those of genius, were recognized in this. "Let us put our brows of the living," he would say, resolved to do in the case of Whitman's lecture in Philadelphia, and, incidentally, the principle of mercenary benevolence had found to be so admirably practical, he would, with the inevitably generous help to smoothe the remaining wrinkles, had wiped the death-damp from the soldier's brow, and breathed a threnody to martyred Lincoln. But when the



EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO

Ingersoll was scornfully refused.<sup>1</sup> The use of Horace Hall was permitted, however; and Ingersoll's "Testimonial to Walt Whitman" enabled the latter to realize nearly nine hundred dollars.<sup>2</sup> But the insignificance of this or any other sum in comparison with the rest that the testimonial enabled him to realize, was probably never known by any one else than Whitman. For, to be appreciated by even the unlettered would have been a measure; to be appreciated by the literary mediocrities would have been satisfaction; but to be analyzed, understood, accepted, interpreted, justified, and finally canonized, by genius itself, must have been paradise. And all this, in his lengthened address entitled *Liberty in Literature*, Ingersoll

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<sup>1</sup> "Ingersoll never did anything but good-naturedly refer to the incident. Several years later I mentioned to him a story current here to the effect that Alfred Baker had had some superstition in connection with a terrific storm which arose during the evening of Ingersoll's lecture in the Academy. In writing me, Ingersoll handled the matter humorously, as was his practice: 'I am not surprised at the reason Baker had for shutting me out of the Academy. Superstition has nothing to do with common sense. Even Seneca, the philosopher, was struck of several kinds of thunder—among others the thunder of lightning. So you see that Rome and Philadelphia are on a par.' A

surely did with consummate mastery the secret, not only of Whitman's poetry. Indeed, those will do but measure Ingersoll's aesthetic knowledge and who fail to examine with care the eloquence which he so lovingly plumbrow of the aged author of *Leaves of*

"The evening of the last meeting of Ingersoll and Whitman," write the biographers, "was a sad one. \* \* \* Whitman was outwardly cheerful he realized the stream of life ran low. But the two talked their talk out and parted like lovers resigned to events." "

"After the supper and talk - after the day is done

\* \* \* \* \*

Good-bye and good-bye with emotional lips re-

\* \* \* \* \*

Shunning, postponing severance seeking to  
word ever so little,

E'en at the exit-door turning - changes rapidly  
e'en as he descends the steps,

Something to eke out a minute additional  
deepening,

\* \* \* \* \* dimmer the forthgoer's visage and

Soon to be lost for aye in the darkness

## *EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO*

that the electric current, which has done so much to consummate the living death of modern poetry, brought to him the news of the actual death of Walt Whitman.

So when the former reached the little cottage in Pickle Street, Camden, on March 30th, he found that the hour was growing late; that the "common talk" whom Whitman had loved, and who loved him,—now even more than in life,—the soldier, nurse and singer of "Chants Democratic," had already been and departed: there were cheek-powers, moist with dearer tears, and tears alone that were dearer still, on the plain oak casket. But thousands of the more cultured had gathered on a Harleigh Cemetery, where Whitman, in life, had wished to rest in death; and there, in the presence of those who would perhaps more clearly understand, and, if they did not more keenly mourn and sympathize, the great orator might fulfil the last sad office,—the last sad promise,—of a deep and sacred friendship. For it was the expressed wish of Whitman, that Ingersoll, who, as we have seen

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

the most eminent citizen of this Republic, lies dead, and we have met to pay a tribute to his greatness and his worth.

It would be obviously inexpedient to read the whole of this memorable tribute. I will now examine particular passages as we proceed. In so doing, let us see if any reader will fail to be struck by a silent awe and admiration, as before :—  
Angelo, at this portrait of the author of *Grass* :—

“He was built on a broad and splendid plan—appearing to have limitations—passing easily for a brute and seas and constellations; caring nothing for the charts with which timid pilots hug the shore, but giving with recklessness of genius to winds and waves and nothing as long as the stars were above him. He was a man, among writers, among verbal varnishers and literary milliners and tailors, with the unconscious of an antique god.” (xii 474)

He was the poet of life and love, of the natural. “He was not only the poet of the race, not only the poet of the Great I, but he was the poet of the human race.”  
“he was the poet of Death.” But “In all things, a man; and above genius,

*EIGHTEEN EIGHTY-NINE TO NINETY-TWO*

understanding,—the mental amplitude,—to declare  
him:—

“He has uttered more supreme words than any writer of  
century, possibly of almost any other” (xii 475)

and:—

“He wrote a liturgy for mankind; he wrote a great and splend  
alm of life, and he gave to us the gospel of humanity—the great  
ospel that can be preached.” (xii 476)

Of the poet's serenity at the approach of death  
he said:—

“He never lost his hope. When the mists filled the valleys,  
laked upon the mountain tops, and when the mountains in darkness  
appeared, he fixed his gaze upon the stars.

“In his brain were the blessed memories of the day, and in his heart  
were mingled the dawn and dusk of life.

“He was not afraid; he was cheerful every moment. The laugh  
ing nymphs of day did not desert him. They remained that they  
might clasp the hands and greet with smiles the veiled and silent  
sisters of the night. And when they did come, Walt Whitman  
stretched his hand to them. On one side were the nymphs of  
day, and on the other the silent sisters of the night, and so, hand  
and, between smiles and tears, he reached his journey's end.

“From the frontier of life, from the western wave-kissed shore,  
sent us messages of content and hope, and these messages seem now

And yet Ingersoll, adding still further depths of affection, of pathos,—of beauty to his tribute a “little wreath” :—

“And so I lay this little wreath upon this great loved him living, and I love him still.” (xii 477)

It may be a little wreath. Sure must have known. But who, I ask, shall the tomb of him who wove it?

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *FROM EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO EIGHTEEN NINETY-SIX*

AS IS already evident, Ingersoll was the pro-  
nouncer of many eulogies of the dead ; but  
of all his contributions to what I shall ven-  
ure to term elegiac prose-poetry, none, perhaps,  
more interesting, as far as the memory of Ingersoll  
himself is concerned, than the one which was made  
in the little town of Dowagiac, Mich., on Jan-  
uary 25, 1893. The family of Philo D. Beckwith  
in pursuance of an ideal which he had dearly cher-  
ished, but which he had not yet realized at the  
time of his death, had caused to be erected for the  
benefit of the people among whom he had risen  
from poverty to fortune, in the manufacture  
of shoes, a theater in which should be seen and  
heard only the highest and noblest in drama and

individual philanthropist concerned as general. Conspicuous in the entablature of the palace of music and song, of mirth and of tears, the orator beheld a series of medallions such of his artistic and intellectual idols as Shakespeare, Voltaire, Paine, Wagner, and Nor was this all that he beheld. Mr. Ingersoll had possessed profound admiration and respect for the individual who had done more than any other that had ever lived, to destroy slavery, and, accordingly, beside that of Shakespeare, on the exterior of the second memorial theater erected—the handsomest theater of its kind in the world—had been placed a medallion of Ingersoll himself.

## § 2.

During the following year, Ingersoll delivered three more original lectures: *Abraham Lincoln*, which, as a literary masterpiece, ranks with *Shakespeare*; *Voltaire*, which ranks second; and *About the Holy Bible*.

It is biographically interesting and in-



*EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO NINETY-SIX*

that city,—under no slight emotional strain, may readily be imagined. To eulogize Voltaire from a pulpit!—that was almost too great a privilege. The whereabouts of the manuscript of the lecture is unknown. The present lecture was first delivered in Chicago, under the auspices of the Chicago Press Club, to an audience of six thousand people, five hundred being seated on the stage. There is in the annals of oratory no nobler grander passage than one which this production contains—the one in which the body of Voltaire rests upon the ruins of the Bastille!—

“On reaching Paris the great procession moved along the Rue d’Antoine. Here it paused, and for one night upon the ruins of the Bastille rested the body of Voltaire—rested in triumph, in glory, rested on fallen wall and broken arch, on crumbling stone still drenched with tears, on rusting chain and bar and useless bolt—above the dungeons dark and deep, where light had faded from the lives of men, and hope had died in breaking hearts.

“The conqueror resting upon the conquered.—Throned upon the Bastille, the fallen fortress of Night, the body of Voltaire, from whose brain had issued the Dawn.” (iii 244)

*The Foundations of Faith* were lecture published with that title in 1881.

§ 4.

The most memorable happening however, if not the most memorable all his later years, was the reunion of members of his old war regiment, Illinois Cavalry, at Elmhurst, on September 1, 1899. The reunion was a joint one, members of other Illinois regiments taking part. Those present were not only, but others, —representatives of the old regiments and women,—were present. It was the thing more than a reunion of the old soldiers, scarred and gray, who, in the flush of manhood, had borne the Stars and Stripes from Bull Run to Appomattox,—pathetic and inspiring as such a reunion always is. The significance to Ingersoll lay in the fact that he was a veteran colonel; for he was the honored guest, and of course the guest of honor of the occasion.

The greeting which was extended by

## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO NINETY-SIX*

When, therefore, the special train bearing Ingersoll, accompanied by some five hundred of the prominent citizens of Peoria) arrived in Elmwood, pictures and busts of him were to be seen in all windows. He was met at the station by a reception committee and afterwards, escorted by an army of veterans, he marched to the west side of the public square where he passed between lines of his old friends and comrades. "We're glad to see you, 'Bob,' " came the shout to him who, in the old days, was accustomed to receive from the same source the formal military salute. "I have attended many soldiers' reunions," says Colonel Clark E. Carr, "but never attended another one when there was so much affection and devotion manifested by officers and men of the regiment as was manifested for him to them, what mattered it whether they agreed or not in politics, or in religion? There was the old colonel; and every man expressed in tears which he vainly endeavored to conceal, that I knew his name was graven upon that great, generous, loving heart." As Colonel Ingersoll was escorted to the stand from which he was to review

by Mr. E. R. Brown, the latter introduced Ingersoll as "the greatest of living orators." Ingersoll's declaration of a quarter-century in Rouse's Hall, Peoria, that there would be "one free man in Illinois," evoked a feeling of gratitude for what Ingersoll had accomplished for the freedom and happiness of his country by his mighty brain, his great spirit, and his great heart. The appearance of Ingersoll was a shout for a mighty shout that was heartily received by every one present. It was fully ten minutes after the cheering subsided, and as the orator began to speak, it was renewed, and he was followed for several minutes more. Then he began

"Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow-citizens, Old Friends and Strangers:

"It gives me the greatest pleasure to meet again those with whom I became acquainted in the morning of my life. It is like the setting sun. The sun of life is slowly sinking in the west, and, as it comes, nothing can be more delightful than to see those faces that I knew in youth.

"When first I knew you the hair was brown; the lines were not quite so deep, and the eyes were not so dim. Mingled with this pleasure is sadness, sadness for those who have passed away—for the dead." (ix 497)

## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO NINETY-SIX*

oned and beautiful, the deeds of her founder presented, in graphic panorama, her political, agricultural, industrial, financial, and intellectual progress; and concluded with this touching tribute and farewell to those of her defenders who were present:—

“And what shall I say to you, survivors of the death-filled days to you, my comrades, to you whom I have known in the great days of the time when the heart beat fast and the blood flowed strong; the days of high hope—what shall I say? All I can say is that my heart goes out to you, one and all. To you who bared your bosoms to the storms of war; to you who left loved ones, to die if need be for the sacred cause. May you live long in the land you helped to save; may the winter of your age be as green as spring, as full of blossoms as summer, as generous as autumn, and may you, surrounded by plenty, with your wives at your sides and your grandchildren on your knees, live long. And when at last the fires of life burn low when you enter the deepening dusk of the last of many, many happy days; when your brave hearts beat weak and slow, may the memory of your splendid deeds; deeds that freed your fellow-men; deeds that kept your country on the map of the world; deeds that kept the flag of the Republic in the air—may the memory of these deeds fill your souls with peace and perfect joy. Let it console you to know that you are not to be forgotten. Centuries hence your story will be told in heart and song, and upon your honored graves flowers will be lovingly laid by millions of men and women now unborn.” (ix 530)

ersoll left no autobiography of the ordinary kind. It is here stated, with pleasure, that one of the extraordinary kind—an analysis of his mental life. To be sure, it is not perfect in that comprehensiveness and exhaustive detail,—that searching self-analysis, so desirable in such a work. It does not compare in these respects with the *Method*, by Descartes, the *Confessions* of Rousseau, nor the *Autobiography* of Spence. It is certain, however, that it possesses, perhaps fully as high a literary and esthetic value as of these, while it is, at the same time, sufficient in the more substantial qualities of intellect.

*Why I Am An Agnostic*, a lecture, 1896, gives a succinct, clear, and interesting account of Ingersoll's literary and intellectual evolution. It is a charming and fascinating record of his intellectual voyage, from the shadows and changeable mists of boyhood's uncertainties, across life's perilous ocean, to the rock of truth that lie in the calm and silvered waters of old age. Never did any man find a more

## EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO NINETY-SIX

*Why I Am An Agnostic* was the crowning work of Ingersoll's anti-theological career. It gave, in a coherent and unified form, as no other work has, a frank and lucid account of the multitudinous factors and influences that had shaped his mental course—an analytic description of the foundation on which he finally stood. As you read the first pages of this unique mental autobiography,—this confession of "the Agnostic faith"—there is presented, in unmistakable clearness, the rural theology of fifty years ago. You view its trappings and paraphernalia, become sensible of all its auxiliaries, and breathe the close and stifling atmosphere that hangs like a pall over the credulous multitude. "Environment is a sculptor—a painter," says Ingersoll; and so it is—with most of us. Not so with Ingersoll himself. In the very environment which I have described,—before the sombrous background of crude and provincial theology,—you watch, in *Why I Am An Agnostic*, the unfolding, the development, the ascending struggle, the enfranchisement, the triumph of a great mind. Nor is the goal attained

§ 6.

On April 12th (1896), at the Columbian Exposition, Chicago, he addressed the Militant Church, *To Reform Mankind*. In this address, great in its wisdom, in its profound insight into the things of life; great in its love of humanity, its sympathy for those who toil,—for the oppressed, the despised; great in its epigram, in its beauty, its eloquence, he gave expression to many of the reformatory ideas which are presented, in subsequent chapters, in his political and sociological teachings.

§ 7.

During the political campaign of 1896, he again gave his mighty eloquence to the cause of Republicanism. And he gave something more, even, than any other man could give: he gave his moral and intellectual prestige, a quality which, in the mind of his fellow-citizens, was fully equivalent to his eloquence. For whatever may have been



*EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO NINETY-SIX*

honor; and that, therefore, if he classed himself with the ranks of the Republican party, it was because that party was going in his direction, that because it stood, in the main, for those political principles which he sincerely believed would bring the greatest happiness for the greatest number to this Republic. On such a foundation,—with the undisputed scepter of Polymnia in his hand and the wreath of integrity upon his brow,—he was able to throw into the political balance greater weight than any other extra-political individual beneath the flag.

In this connection, the following extract from a letter of September 27, 1896, from Mr. Frank Milbert, then political editor of the *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, is of interest:—

"I am delighted that you are to give us so many speeches. \* \* \* I want to see the silver craze, not the man Bryan, honored with a regular Napoleonic tomb. Pile the stones up until there can be no boot catching four years hence! In fact, it is high time for the American people to put a stop to the jeopardizing of business for campaign purposes. \* \* \* That is the reason I want your voice heard. Of course there is a personal element too. I just want the country to realize that the orator of orators still lives, and that the genius which flashed

Street. It was filled from center-pole  
ence, by an audience of over twenty  
thousands more being unable to gain a

In presenting the orator, the *Chicago Tribune*,  
William P. McCabe, according to the  
*Inter-Ocean*, said, in part:—

"My duty is to introduce to you one whose big heart  
are filled with love and patriotic care for the things  
country he fought for and loves so well."

"This world will see but one Ingersoll."  
*The Inter-Ocean*, in the same report,  
spontaneous declaration of a celebrated  
in 1876, who had listened to the "Plu-  
Speech." *The Inter-Ocean* continued

"That same sentiment, in thought, emotion, or voice  
emanated from upward of twenty thousand citizens  
heard the eloquent and magic Ingersoll \* \* \* as he  
living gospel of true republicanism.

"The old war-horse, silvered by long years of faithful  
country, aroused the same all-prevailing enthusiasm  
campaigns of Grant and Hayes and Garfield.

"He has lost not one whit, not one iota, of his  
presence, his profound reasoning, his convincing logic,  
wit, grandiloquence—in fine, all the graces of the orator  
informed by increased patriotism and the nobility of the

## EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO NINETY-SIX

spirit inseparable from man's soul, is his life. Last night he sought to inspire those who heard him with the same loyalty, and he succeeded.

"Those passionate outbursts of eloquence, the wit that fairly effulgored, the logic as inexorable as heaven's decrees, his rhetoric and immutable facts driven straight to his hearers with the strength of bullets, aroused applause that came as spontaneous combustion." "The light."

This speech, published in full in the same issue of *The Inter-Ocean*, caused the sale of "more than forty thousand extra copies of that issue" of the paper alone (says *The Inter-Ocean* of July 22, 1896, editorially); "and the demand was only cut off by the publication of the speech, in pamphlet form, by the Republican State Central Committee. Fully one hundred thousand copies of the pamphlet were sent out by the committee, in response to calls from all over the country." How such popularity would delight the publisher of even your "best-seller"!

Ingersoll's appearance in New York marked the final rally of the campaign there. Admission was by ticket only; but the fact that the rarest of oriental viands and sparkling cordials from the same

was crowded to its utmost capacity. Enthusiasm, if we accept the well-grounded opinion of New Yorkers, that audiences in Carnegie Hall are not noted for this quality, then we must not compare New York audiences sometimes forgetful of roundings; for the author can testify, from personal knowledge, that this audience was as large and intelligent as it was large and intelligent.

Referring to the orator's first sentence, which states that "the assembly was his from the start," This is only half the truth. The enthusiasm which he was greeted as he entered the hall, the many impatient cries, and the "Three cheers for Ingersoll!" unmistakably showed that the assembly was his long before he began to speak, not long before he arrived. Indeed, there is no doubt that Ingersoll as a presidential candidate would have received more votes from this assembly than did William McKinley. It was a great assembly; he was not only the orator, but the personality, of the occasion. And who among those who were present recall his appearance,—sitting in a huge arm-chair on the platform, looking down at the audience with a

## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO NINETY-SIX*

"I have seen a picture of the old man, sitting upon a mountain side, above him the eternal snow—below, the smiling valley of the tropics, filled with vine and palm; his chin upon his breast, his eyes deep, thoughtful and calm—his forehead majestic—grander than the mountain upon which he sat—crowned with the snow of his whitened hair—he looked the intellectual autocrat of this world." (i 101)

But that actual picture on the platform, which was the subject of this description of a picture on the mountain-side, so vividly recalls, was soon disturbed. "There is no more intelligent audience in the civilized world to which it would be necessary to introduce Robert G. Ingersoll," said the chairman, Mr. John W. Gilholland; and the assembly burst into a pandemonium of vociferous approval and welcome, whereupon the orator arose and advanced slowly, impressively to the front of the stage. After a moment, the tremendous height and volume of applause immediately preceding, Ingersoll raised his hand, and the applause diminished,—so much so that a lesser orator might have commenced to speak. But Ingersoll did not risk a word: he stood calm and serene. Then, after several minutes, all ears were stopped with oppressive silence, and he felt that all eyes were centered upon him, he said:

The applause that followed this which I have endeavored to indicate the emphasis, rendered it almost as if orator to speak his next sentence as if him to begin his first. He had struck and virile hand the fundamental chords of publicanism—of true democracy—and strings of every auditor were vibrating with them.

Ingersoll had spoken only a few minutes in complete abandon to the subject, he indulged his habit of walking slowly from side to side. In almost the first he encountered the traditional speaker. Seizing it with his own hands, he carried it toward the back of the stage, or front row of chairs thereon would afford the free field which was so part of his theory and practice of oratory. In the latter, all emphasis, tone, gesture, came from "inside"—from thought, sentiment, emotion.

Once, during this address, he paused and, with a look of earnest appeal to the audience, exclaimed:

## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-THREE TO NINETY-SIX*

sue the bill and give the fellow with the cattle a rest. Is it possible for the mind to conceive anything more absurd than that the Government can create money? (ix 574)

At another point, Ingersoll gave another example,—a strikingly beautiful one,—of his practice of suiting the outward manner to the inward thought and feeling in oratory. In illustration of his statement that everything is not to be measured in dollars and cents,—that “a thing is worth, sometimes, the thought that is in it, sometimes the genius,”—he said:—

“Here is a man buys a little piece of linen for twenty-five cents, buys a few paints for fifteen cents, and a few brushes, and he paints a picture; just a little one; a picture, maybe, of a cottage with a dear old woman, white hair, serene forehead and satisfied eyes; at the corner a few hollyhocks in bloom—maybe a tree in blossom, and as you listen you seem to hear the songs of birds—the hum of bees, and your childhood all comes back to you as you look. You feel the dew grass beneath your bare feet once again, and you go back until the old woman on the porch is young and fair. There is a sense here. Genius has done its work. And the little picture is worth, maybe, ten, maybe fifty thousand dollars. All the result of labor and genius.” (ix 561)

At the words “and he paints a picture,” Ingersoll said:

final touch to the painting, there were expressions, both voiced and mute, of joy and delight. Not that this rather cold picture is considered artistically worthy of even any of Ingersoll's loftiest inspiration. It produced its effect largely by appeal to the masterly delivery, to familiar associations, and by coming with his really sublime production on the same ratio as do the music of *Home* and of *Die Walküre*. It is not such a picture as one would have expected Ingersoll to paint that night: for he was painting familiar things; and he spoke "as a man." And with what consummate ease! In half an hour and a half,—as though it were a trifle,—he handled the three problems of "tariff," "government," as easily as a skillful juggler keeps only as many balls in the air. The applause was almost continuous.

Whatever disappointments or delusions may have been, or may be, the lot of other visitors to the Music Hall, those who were present that evening of October 29, 1896, will remember how imposingly and impressively Richard Ingersoll filled the stage in his last political



## CHAPTER IX.

### *FROM EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO EIGHTEEN NINETY-NINE .*

TWO lectures, *The Truth* and *A Thanksgiving Sermon*, were published in 1897. The orator's attitude toward the subject of the first, and the objects and recipients of his gratitude and thankfulness in the second, may be safely left, for the present at least, to inference and imagination. These lectures are among the rarest of Ingersoll's artistic and intellectual treats.

#### § 2.

Even those whose knowledge of Ingersoll has been derived solely from the preceding pages will not be surprised at the statement, that, in common with many other individuals of genius, he was

born of Love. Had there never been any human love, never could have been uttered a strain of music. The mother, looking in the eyes of her babe, gave the enraptured air." (xii 128)

Could anything be tenderer than the love of a mother? It will, however, doubtless surprise many that, at the same time, he did not, as we have remarked, know "one note from a human voice." He did not need to know: he had a heart that felt. By this, I do not mean, that, like some of the animals he had, in his thorax, merely a mechanical apparatus which pumped red ice-water, or that his cranium, merely an extremely accurate and complicated psychical contrivance for examining facts, and forming conclusions. I mean, that he had feeling and imagination, in the highest, and noblest sense—the elements of the instinct, and insight of which all the animals which can neither be taught nor led are coexistent with genius; and which, without knowing why, recognize their kind as inevitably, as the nodding violet recognizes the image of its perfumed self in the still waters of the meadow stream.

## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

unset, a star; in the hearing of "music yearning like a god in pain,"—most men are dumb; but the poet is moved to expression. Proof of the usually profound depths to which Ingersoll was stirred by music is not only a part of the precious memories of all who were near and dear to him, there is an abundance of such proof in his work. This varies from the merest fanciful word-picture of tone, melody, harmony, as occurring in the simplest pieces, to the most profound, subtle, and strangely beautiful conceptions of the greatest productions of the greatest composer.

Thus, in Ingersoll's posthumous writings is the random "fragment" in appreciation of the voice of Scalchi:—

"Imagine amethysts, rubies, diamonds, emeralds and opals mingled with liquids—then imagine these marvelous glories of light and color changed to a tone, and you have the wondrous, the incomparable voice of Scalchi." (xii 356)

And this, of "The Organ":—

"The beginnings—the timidities—the half-thoughts—blushes—suggestions—a phrase of grace and feeling—a sustained note—the wondrous

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRAISAL

drawn to Ingersoll in the ties of a friend, only death could sever? The following "Memorial," written in August, 1880, is an interesting evidence of one such friendship, and furnishes additional proof of Ingersoll's noble appreciation of music, and his power to convey to others, in language as subtle as the strains of the violin itself, expressions of his appreciation:—

"This week the great violinist Edouard Reményi visited the Bass Rocks House, Cape Ann, Mass., and delighted and entranced the fortunate idlers of the town nearly all the time, night and day, seemingly with his own music. Among the many selections given, I remember from the Tenth Sonata in E flat, also from the Twelfth minor, by Mozart. Nothing could exceed the wonderfulness of the selections from the Twelfth Sonata. A hush came upon the audience, and when he ceased, tears fell upon his face. Then followed the Elegie from Ernst; then 'The Fairy Dance' composed by himself—a fairy piece, full of wings and moonlight and melody, where fountains fall in shower, waves of music die on sands of gold—then came the Schubert, and he played this with infinite spirit, in a frenzy, as though music itself were mad with joy. He played the Sonata in G, in three movements, by Beethoven."

"Where fountains fall in showers of pearls"

## EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE

In another "fragment," Ingersoll writes Remenyi's playing :—

"In my mind the old tones are still rising and falling—still throbbing, pleading, beseeching, imploring, wailing like the lost—rising and triumphant, superb and victorious—then caressing and whispering every thought of love—intoxicated, delirious with joy and dying with passion—fading to silence as softly and imperceptibly as consciousness is lost in sleep." (xii 350)

We shall not wonder at the praise bestowed upon these descriptions if we consider that, at the time of their writing, Remenyi, who had just completed his tour of the world, was aglow with renewed inspiration naturally incident to personal association with the foremost musical masters then living, including Brahms, Liszt, and Wagner.

Remenyi's admiration of, and fondness for, Ingersoll were most intense. The violinist was frequent guest of the orator, whose self and family would delight by the hour with his marvelous music. His *Liberty* is dedicated to Ingersoll; and once saw an envelope that was addressed in Remenyi's peculiar hand, "To Col. Robert G. Ingersoll, the World's Brain Progenitor." Remenyi

ersollibus," or both, and, after running of affectionate friendship, would end to alllll," from "Your porridge prodigious friend, the old fiddler." They are amusing and delightful. Thus one written in Chicago, on February 8, 1892, hopes that Ingersoll (to arrive later) will be thousands of other friends long enough and take lunch with me and my friend Pratt, who is the very biggestest success on this Globe." Another letter, a prospective visit to "400 (5th Avenue) with the warning: " \* \* \* and then I will suffocate you with music." Of these communications, not too intimate for publication, shall here be introduced in full, and violating (to the ruthless rules of grammar) the unique musical genius and little panned it:—

"73 WEST 85th STREET  
"N. YORK,  
"THURSDAY

"To

"Col. Robert Ingersoll

## EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE

precious good care of it—and to-day it is the 342d day that I am  
g on milk—and apples, and *rough-shod* bread, but which is go  
ough for me, as it keeps me not only in ship-shape order, b  
rough the apples in *apple-pie* order—without the actual pie enter  
to my system—but *all* this is *much too much* about me—but wha  
e principal thing, *is*, that I hope to see you all soon—whereupo  
ill conclude my present epistolary with many lovable salaams  
ou, my prophet—and to you all—

“ Affectionately

“ yours,

“ ED REMENYI.”

From this digression, so naturally incidental  
ngersoll's appreciation of Remenyi's genius (and  
ice versa), we turn to Ingersoll's appreciation  
usic in general. In so doing, we come, in logic  
rogression, to his description of the Sixth Sym  
hony (Beethoven):—

“ This sound-wrought picture of the fields and woods, of floweri  
edge and happy home, where thrushes build and swallows fly, a  
others sing to babes; this echo of the babbled lullaby of broo  
at, dallying, wind and fall where meadows bare their daisied bos  
the sun; this joyous mimicry of summer rain, the laugh of childr  
d the rhythmic rustle of the whispering leaves; this strophe  
asant life; this perfect poem of content and love.” (ii 435)

Although it seem incredible, there was another

## *INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRA*

"During all my life, of course, like other people, I they call music, and I had my favorite pieces, most of pieces being favorites on account of association ; and the music that is beautiful to the world is beautiful association ; not because the music is good, but because association. \* \* \*

"Now, I always felt that there must be some great where, somehow. You know this little music that recurring emphasis every two inches or every three-and I thought there ought to be music somewhere with from horizon to horizon, and that could fill the great down winged notes like the eagle ; if there was not such some time, would make it, and I was waiting for it. it, and I said, 'What music is that ? Who wrote that ? where. I was cold. I was almost hysterical. It brain, to my heart ; not only to association, but to hope and aspiration, all my future ; and they said, 'I of Wagner.' " (xii 173)

Richard Wagner was one of the gods of the altar Ingersoll reverently laid the offerings of his great and tender soul. Had Ingersoll been a musician, he would have made as deep a pilgrimage to Wagner as Wagner made to the East, and we know, that, had Ingersoll arrived at the shrine of Wagner, one of the most devoted of Americans, as well as one of the most devoted of Englishmen, would have accom-



*EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

Wagner." (iii 56) He went even further than this; he declared it as his belief, that the human mind had reached its limit in the three departments concerned. It was his unqualified opinion, notwithstanding his confidence in the future splendor of our race, that man would never produce "anything greater, sublimer, than the marbles of the Greeks or the dramas of Shakespeare, and that the time would never come "when any man, with such instruments of music as we now have, and having nothing but the common air that we now breathe, will \* \* produce greater pictures in sound, greater music than Wagner. Never! never!" (xii 177) And why did Ingersoll hold this opinion? Because he believed that the Greek sculptors and Shakespeare and Wagner had expressed in marble, language and sound, respectively, all that the heart and brain ever were, are, or ever will be, capable of appreciating. He believed, that, just as the atmosphere from the earth and the ocean as much only as the soul is capable of receiving; so there is a limit to what the soul can receive from the oceans and continents of music: and he believed that this limit

imagination's loom more subtly rare  
conceptions,—than those which have  
But his felicity of description, always  
his appreciation, has given us the  
justification of "the music of the future."

"In Wagner's music there is a touch of chaos the  
infinite. The melodies seem strange and changing for  
clouds, and weird harmonies come like sounds from  
by fitful winds, and others moan like waves on dea  
mingled with these, are shouts of joy, with sighs and  
of laughter, and the wondrous voices of eternal love."

After the following poetic vision came  
at Ingersoll's opinion, that Wagner  
eternally supreme—that he has expressed  
all that the heart and brain of man are  
receiving?—

"When I listen to the music of Wagner, I see  
glimpses of the perfect, the swell of a hip, the wave  
glance of an eye. I am in the midst of great galleries  
are passing the endless panoramas. I see vast landscapes  
of verdure and vine, with soaring crags, snow-crowned  
wide seas, where countless billows burst into the wind.  
I am in the depths of caverns roofed with mighty crags  
some rent I see the eternal stars. In a moment the  
river of melody, flowing through some wondrous land

*EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

will not derive a nobler, grander delight from the music of Wagner? Who will not see in the latter the glimmer of the morning-star, the retreating darkness, and catch the light-like shimmer of melody from the violins?—

"The music of Wagner has color, and when I hear the violins, morning seems to slowly come. A horn puts a star above the horizon of the night, in the purple hum of the base, wanders away like some enormous bee across wide fields of dead clover. The light grows whiter as the violins increase. Colors come from other instruments, and then the full orchestra floods the world with day." (xii 130)

Next to the composer of divine harmonies,—the sculptor in sound,—the painter in viewless air,—next to him who, in nature's every tone,—from the softest faint whisper when April amorous smiles, to the monstrous thunder-sobs of night,—tells of the joys and sorrows, the loves and hatreds, the despair, the hopes, the aspirations and the triumphs,—the unlit shallows and the murky deeps of human life—next to him is his interpreter. For, although the composer is the only one who seeks expression in a universal tongue, he is the very one who is most often understood. He has many readers, but

INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPR

the lover of music to enjoy the genius of his master; and Ingersoll regarded him not only the greatest leader in the world, but the noblest, tenderest and the most artistic of Wagner that had ever lived. When the conductor raised his baton, Ingersoll was raptured. Of all the Wagnerian numbers, his fondest of *Tristan und Isolde*, — "that of melody." A gentleman who was associated with Ingersoll told the author on many occasions, during the rendition of other Wagnerian compositions by orchestra, he had seen "the Colonel" come, the tears coursing down his cheeks, was because he was a perfectly developed being, with all the emotions equally accessible. As he naturally and necessarily laughs, so he naturally and necessarily weeps; and

"Great music is always sad, because it tells us of the difference between what we are and what we should be, that even in the vase of joy we find some

## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

family attended, all, including Seidl, were seated at the Ingersoll home.

"Everything seemed to be all right to-night," Seidl, except the harp," remarked Ingersoll, adding as to where, in his judgment, it should have been placed with relation to the other instruments.

"Great God!" exclaimed the conductor, springing to his feet. "You are the only man, but one whom I have ever heard make that criticism, and that man was Richard Wagner!"

Aware of such musical sensitiveness as this on Ingersoll's part, can we wonder, I ask again, at his opinion that Wagner had expressed in sound what the heart and brain of man are capable of realizing? And can we wonder that he formed with Anton Seidl another of those friendships which was severed only by death,—the death of the great interpreter?

As had been the case on the death of Whitman, Ingersoll was absent from home; and the characteristic click of the telegraph told him of the death of Seidl. But who would not have recognized

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

As this message would indicate, and naturally be inferred from all that followed, the death of Seidl touched Ingersoll so profoundly. If we can properly apply the known psychological truth, that a man suffers to the same extent that he enjoys, the death of Seidl, who had for many years been the very source of some of Ingersoll's joys, must indeed have been to the speaker a bitter and bitter sorrow.

As we have seen, it had for more than twenty years been Ingersoll's practice to speak words of love and eulogy above his dead. At the death of Seidl, however, he was unable to do so in New York; and there was not time to do so by mail. His tribute to the great man is therefore notable not only for being the one which Ingersoll ever delivered *in person*, but the only one which he or any one else, present, delivered through the media of the telegraph to the reader.

Since 1846, many millions of telegrams have been transmitted; but it is more than

## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

ous harmonies that tell of all there is in life, and touch the longings and the hopes of every heart, has passed from the shores of sound to the realm of silence, borne by the mysterious and resistless tide that ever ebbs but never flows.

"All moods were his. Delicate as the perfume of the first violet, wild as the storm, he knew the music of all sounds, from the rustle of leaves, the whisper of hidden springs, to the voices of the sea.

"He was the master of music, from the rhythmical strains of inexpressible joy to the sob of the funeral march.

"He stood like a king with his sceptre in his hand, and we knew that at every tone and harmony were in his brain, every passion in his heart, and yet his sculptured face was as calm, as serene as perfect. He mingled his soul with the music and gave his heart to the enchanted air.

"He appeared to have no limitations, no walls, no chains. He seemed to follow the pathway of desire, and the marvelous melodies and the sublime harmonies, were as free as eagles above the clouds with their stretched wings.

"He educated, refined, and gave unspeakable joy to many thousands of his fellow-men. He added to the grace and glory of life. He spoke a language deeper, more poetic than words—the language of the perfect, the language of love and death.

"But he is voiceless now; a fountain of harmony has ceased. Inspired strains have died away in night, and all its murmuring melodies are strangely still.

"We will mourn for him, we will honor him, not in words, but in the language that he used.

"Anton Seidl is dead. Play the great funeral march. Envelop him in music. Let its wailing waves cover him. Let its wild and mournful winds sigh and moan above him. Give his face to its kisses.

the Siegfried march mingled the so  
greatest composer "for all the dea  
sorrow of the greatest orator for Anton

§ 3.

*Superstition* was delivered, for the f  
Sunday October 16th, in Chicago. In  
Ingersoll surveyed, with the intuitive  
insight of the poet,—the analytical per  
astronomical scope of the philosopher,  
realm of thought. With reason as h  
guide, and touchstone, he began, as h  
did, at the foundation, by specifying  
mental operations which must be class  
stition; and he declared: "The fo  
superstition is ignorance, the super  
faith, and the dome is a vain hope." (I  
then analytically examined, as typical,  
superstitions of mankind,—from that o  
female, to that of the learned theolog  
most authentic creed"; and he place  
cisely the same intellectual plane. If  
there is as much evidence for the bo



## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

marries; three, he courts; four, he marries; five, goes away," as there was in the mind of the theological astronomer who sees in the glimmer of the constant sun the image of the "Great First Cause." A shower of petals in the sunlight, from the dimple of a maiden, was just as convincing as a shower of stars from the hand of Time, in the dusky domain of night. In nature's infinite realm—throughout the thoughtless eons past—nothing had occurred that had failed to occur, with reference to man. So far as "design," "plan," and "purpose" were concerned, a man and a petal were the same. Hence to believe in any form, phase, or manifestation of the supernatural, was simply superstition.

But this lecture was something more than a classification,—something more than a declaration as to what is, and what is not, superstition. The latter, born of ignorance, had given us, in its multifarious forms, all there is of evil; so science, born of intelligence, had given us all there is of good. We must therefore abandon superstition and the supernatural, and depend absolutely upon intelligence and the natural—upon reason and

This, in brief, was the positive el  
lecture,—its cardinal conclusion. Bu  
many minor ones; and of these, the m  
to theologians, if not the most importa  
the Prince of Darkness. It was declar  
soll, after a most critical examination  
that,—notwithstanding the terrible ev  
always followed, and which must ever  
in the supernatural, in miracles, insp  
and wonders, amulets and charms, w  
spirits, and all the rest of superstit  
the Christian world could not deny  
of the Devil; that he was really “th  
the arch”; and that to take him awa  
destroy the entire system.

“A great many clergymen answered  
this statement. Some of these min  
their belief in the existence of his Sat  
while others actually denied his e  
some, without stating their own posit  
others believed, not in the existence  
devil, but in the personification of evi  
references to the Devil in the Scripture

EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE

they wisely and consistently could have done: they could have kept silence. This would, indeed, have been "golden." But they had evidently gained prudence from *My Reviewers Reviewed*; from the experiences of Black, Field, Gladstone, and Manning; nor from those afforded by *A Christmas Sermon* and *Is Suicide A Sin?* They had not learned, even yet, that there was only one thing for them to do with Ingersoll,—leave him entirely alone. Had they done this, they would have been given "the benefit of the doubt," as far as belief in the physical existence of the Devil was concerned. The comparatively few specific remarks on that subject in *Superstition* would not have been multiplied, and all would have remained relatively well. As it transpired, their evasive and shifting criticisms, their attempt literally to "beat the Devil around the stump,"—so aroused the Great Agnostic's sense of justice and mental honesty as to bring forth one of his most formidable rejoinders. While *Superstition* was comparatively brief, and weaker on any given point than it would have been had its author not been obliged to deal with the many aspects and

statements of the clergymen concerning  
 remarks on the Devil in *Superstition*,  
 of this line from Heine: 'Christ rode  
 but now asses ride on Christ.'" (iv 354)

Ingersoll then reviewed the history  
 ology. He showed that all the devils  
 small, like all the gods, were created by  
 that they were inferred from nature by  
 sculptured by fear and terror from inj  
 nomena. He showed that Christianit  
 its particular devil from the Jews, who b  
 from Babylon; that the Old Testament  
 existence of a real living Devil, not of "  
 fication of evil"; that, according to thi  
 Devil once lived in Heaven, raised a reb  
 was cast out; that "it is impossible to e  
 away without at the same time expl  
 away"; that had it not been for the I  
 would have been no Christ; that, as  
 fact, "the religion known as 'Christi  
 invented by God himself to repair i  
 wreck and ruin that had resulted from  
 work." (iv 361)

He declared that on the subject of th

*EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

Devil." "If," said Ingersoll, "Christ was not tempted by the Devil, then the temptation was born in his own heart. If that be true, can it be said that he was divine? If theseadders, theadders, were coiled in his bosom, was he the Son of God? Was he pure?" Ingersoll also showed, from the gospels, that not only the writers thereof, but Christ himself, believed in the existence of a real Devil, and of innumerable little devils; that the principal occupation of Christ was the casting out of devils; and that, therefore, if the Devil does not exist, the New Testament is not inspired, the faith of man is a mistake, the atonement is an absurdity, and "Christ was either honestly mistaken, insane, or an impostor." (iv 368-93)

Of course, I have recited only a small part of the arguments which the Great Agnostic brought forward on the point concerned; but even these few will suffice to indicate the utter folly of his clerical critics in breaking silence—the consummate error with which he refuted their assertion, "that all references to the Devil in the Scriptures could be explained on the hypothesis that the Devil, the

Following as it did within four months the delivery of *Superstition*, this lecture on the subject affords, in its acutely reasoned main body, the manner in which it was brought to a close, another typical example, not only of Ingersoll's Agnostic's controversial resourcefulness, but also of the versatility of his genius.

"What poem was that with which you closed?" was asked of one of Ingersoll's associates, who had not heard the lecture delivered.

"I do not know," answered the latter, to the effect, that he supposed it to be a quotation from one of the poets.

The inquirer replied, in substance, that he did not think so; that the poem consisted of four stanzas; and that they were not from the works of any with whom he was familiar. When Ingersoll was seen, soon afterwards, he was asked by the same associate about the poem in question. He replied that it was something which he had written the previous noon, before the lecture. It was then that "the Colonel" was writing for a time, the previous noon, at a desk in the room in which

*EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

real poetic quality. Ingersoll preceded its introduction by the sentence, "Let me now give you a declaration of a creed." I quote the first, fifteenth, and last stanzas:—

"We have no falsehoods to defend—  
We want the facts;  
Our force, our thought, we do not spend  
In vain attacks.  
And we will never meanly try  
To save some fair and pleasing lie.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We have no master on the land—  
No king in air—  
Without a manacle we stand,  
Without a prayer,  
Without a fear of coming night,  
We seek the truth, we love the light.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The hands that help are better far  
Than lips that pray.  
Love is the ever gleaming star  
That leads the way,  
That shines, not on vague worlds of bliss,  
But on a paradise in this.

§ 4.

On June 2d of this year (1899), before the American Free Religionists at the Hollis Street Theater, Boston, *What Is Religion?* many clergy were present and surprised in the audience.

To a correct knowledge of his mind throughout his career as a rationalist is as essential as it is interesting. His last public utterance on religion was his first, *Progress*, chiefly in being. Following is its noble and heroic part.

"Religion can never reform mankind, because

"It is far better to be free, to leave the forts to stand erect and face the future with a smile.

"It is far better to give yourself sometimes with wave and tide, with the blind force of a dream, to forget the chains and limitations, to forget purpose and object, to lounge in the picture to feel once more the clasps and kisses of the morning back, to see again the forms and faces, fair pictures for the coming years, to forget all and threats, to feel within your veins life's joy, the martial music, the rhythmic beating of your

"And then to rouse yourself to do all useful things, to be a man, to be a citizen, to be a



EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE

n interview published in *The Post-Express* Rochester, N. Y., appeared the following:—

“Question.—If you should write your last sentence on religious topics, what would be your closing?”

“Answer.—I now, in the presence of death, affirm and reaffirm the truth of all that I have said against the superstitions of the world. I would say at least that much on the subject with my last breath.” (iii 452)

In conjunction with this and the preceding quotation, the following letter to Clinton J. Robins (Dayton, O.) is of interesting significance, especially when we consider its date:—

“NEW YORK, JULY 13, 1899.

C. J. Robins, Esq.

“DEAR SIR: First accept a thousand thanks for your good letter. The only trouble is that it is too flattering. You are right in thinking that I have not changed. I still believe that all religions are based on falsehoods and mistakes. I still deny the existence of the supernatural, and I still say that real religion is usefulness. Thanking you for your letter, I remain

“Yours always,

“R. G. Ingersoll.”

His last public appearance was on June 21st, 1900, in an argument before the vi-

INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND

nature—that it had given us “all that  
in the world.”

So, too, his last letter, like his last  
religious, and his last political address,  
the same sentiments that, with stoicism  
and heroism, he had voiced throughout  
The letter, addressed to the editor  
(Mr. William Matlock), Chester,  
follows:—

“‘WALSTON,’

“DOBBIS’ FERRY

“JULY

“*Editor Clarion.*

“MY DEAR SIR: I enclose a clipping from your  
you copied it from some exchange.

“The words attributed to me I never uttered.

“‘I have one sentiment for soldiers;—cheerfulness  
for the dead.’ This is mine—but all the rest is false.

“It is true that I think the treatment of the Filipinos  
It is also true that I do not want the Filipinos if  
I believe in expansion—if it is honest.

“I want Cuba if the Cubans want us.

“At the same time, I think that our forces should  
withdrawn from Cuba, and the people of that island  
themselves. We waged the war against Spain  
—and we must bear the laurel unstained.

“Yours always,

“R. G. INGERSOLL

## *EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

VI, that one of the most remarkable exceptions of which nature made in the case of Ingersoll was his intellectual vigor and productiveness during "the afternoon of life." These were undiminishing and manifest until November 16, 1896. In the evening of that date, however, while delivering a lecture at Janesville, Wis., he experienced a cerebral hemorrhage. Its immediate effect was wholly subjective, and did not prevent the completion of the discourse. He continued to lecture, on his original itinerary, for a few days, when, at the solicitation of his family, he went to Chicago and consulted Dr. Frank Billings, one of the faculty of the Northwestern University Medical School. Dr. Billings advised him to go home and rest two months, which he did, resuming his lectures on January 24, 1897. About this time, he developed angina pectoris, from which he became an intense sufferer.

For a number of years, he had been in the practice of spending the summer at "Walston," a charming country-seat, which, taking its name from his son-in-law, Mr. Walston H. Brown, was situated on the highlands of the Hudson valley.

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL A

loved, I hope to end my days. And this I hope  
who hear my voice," (i 438)

said Ingersoll in 1877. Was the  
touched to fulfilment by this tender  
wish?

During the night of Thursday  
20th and 21, 1899, at "Walston,"  
attack of acute indigestion, sleeping  
suffering great pain, which he so  
with nitroglycerine, previously pre  
went to breakfast in the morning  
sat on the veranda, as he was work  
and talking with the family.

About ten-thirty he remarked t  
down and rest awhile, and would t  
play pool with his son-in-law. M  
accompanied her husband up-stairs t  
and remained with him while he sl

About eleven-forty-five he arose  
chair to put on his shoes. Miss  
a member of the family, entered  
followed by Mrs. Ingersoll's sister, M  
rell.

*EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE*

He glanced laughingly at Mrs. Farrell, as she turned to leave the room; and then Mrs. Ingersoll said: "Why, Papa, your tongue is coated—I must give you some medicine."

He looked up at her with a smile and said, "I am better now,"<sup>1</sup> and, as he did so, closed his eyes.

Ingersoll was dead.

The light of a hemisphere was out.

But, companioning that of Shakespeare, another star gleamed in the fadeless galaxy of the immortals.

Since Ingersoll's death,<sup>2</sup> which was caused by angina pectoris, it has been learned that, throughout the two and a half years preceding, he possessed exact knowledge of his physical condition. He had been told by his physicians that he was likely to die at any moment; but, earnestly entreating them to tell no one else, he kept the awful secret from his loved ones. Nor does this alone indicate his concern for their happiness. Although fully realizing that death was ever beside him, he

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX*

Seven years before the development of the disease that caused his death, he said:

"It is a great thing to preach philosophy—*for*. The highest philosophy accepts the inevitable with it as though it were desired." (iii 299)

As soon as poignant and overwrought would permit, it was decided that the funeral should be private and the extreme simplicity. Accordingly, at four o'clock in the afternoon of Tuesday July 25th,—a little more than a week after his death,—his family and friends gathered in the room in which he had died, in which the body, without casket or shroud, rested upon a bier,—rested upon a wilderness of flowers." These had been an expression of sympathy, boundless and loving love, from men and women of all stations and of all parts of America and Europe. The flowers were to pay, in voiceless and wordless beauty, the only tribute not borrowed from the warm heart of the dead himself. If there were any living to whom he had been dearer than himself, they knew that in his own innermost

## EIGHTEEN NINETY-SEVEN TO NINETY-NINE

by *Ebon C. Ingersoll*, by Dr. John Lovejoy Elliot. This constituted the only service or ceremony at "Walston" or elsewhere.

On the morning of Thursday July 27th, it being realized that the last look at the idolized dead could no longer be postponed, the body was borne by moving hands to a hearse, which, followed by funeral carriages containing the family and friends, proceeded, at eight forty-five, to the railroad-station at Hobbs' Ferry. As the cortège passed through the village, business was suspended and blinds were drawn. Scores of men along the streets removed their hats. At the station, the casket and party were transferred to the funeral car "Kensico" and the coach, both of which (as a special train) Mr. J. L. Calloway, the president of the road, had begged for the place at the disposal of the family. At Grand Central Station, New York, the casket and party were again transferred to hearse and carriages; the cortège proceeding, via the East River Twenty-third Street ferry and Greenpoint, Long Island, to the Fresh Pond crematory. The latter was reached at eleven-thirty: and about four in the

lower face upward and backward over  
twines a branch of cypress, and around  
the right side is a sprig of laurel, both in  
bas-relief. On the face is engraved:

*L'urne garde  
La poussière,  
Le cœur  
Le souvenir*

and on the back:

Robert G. Ingersoll

The urn guards the ashes, the heart  
of Robert G. Ingersoll. And so the urn  
—so does the heart.



## CHAPTER X.

### *THE PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION UPON WHICH HE STOOD*

**B**EFORE attempting an estimate of the views the dissemination of which constituted the life-work of Ingersoll, let us calmly and candidly examine the foundation upon which he stood. Let us ascertain, if possible, whether, of frail and flimsy fancy, it rests on the sands of sophistry, or whether, hewn by logic from the granite of intellect, it lies deep and unshakable in the hard-pan of reason.

There have been applied to Ingersoll numerous theological and philosophical epithets and designations. He has been styled a heretic, an unbeliever, a skeptic, a liberal, a rationalist, a materialist, a Freethinker, an infidel, an iconoclast, a disbeliever, an atheist, and an Agnostic. It

Now, all who are tolerably familiar with the English language and the tendencies of Ingersoll's thought will agree that, as Christianity and the other alleged supernaturalisms are heresies, he was a heretic, an unbeliever, a skeptic, and a rationalist, using those words in their generally accepted sense; that he was using that word in its generic philosophical sense, and that he was a Freethinker and a Free Thinker, those words minus, of course, their theological connotation.

Leaving the application of the term to be considered in a later chapter, we shall ascertain whether Ingersoll was a Freethinker. Briefly, a disbeliever, according to the definition of theologians, is one who *refuses* to believe. Of course, it would be just as reasonable to say that one's refusing to like a certain article is an example, as to speak of one's refusing to believe a certain thing. Both belief and unbelief may result from the consideration of the same facts. If in the testimony there is sufficient reason to accept, and belief results; if there is insufficient evidence, and unbelief results.

## HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION

Agnostic." Numerous well-meaning individuals, many of them sincere admirers of Ingersoll, have attempted to rescue his memory from the theological abyss of unbelief by saying that he did not deny, that he only failed to believe. They have strongly emphasized the assertion that he was not an atheist, that he was merely an Agnostic. Would they think if they knew that Ingersoll himself declared the *beliefs* of the atheist and the agnostic to be the same? But let us see for ourselves. A theist is one who believes in the existence of God. An atheist, the opposite of the theist, is one who does not believe in the existence of God. Ingersoll did not believe in the existence of God. Ingersoll was therefore an atheist. But," you will object, "Ingersoll did not deny the existence of God; but an atheist is not an atheist because he denies; he is an atheist because he does not *believe* in the existence of God. He is the atheist who denies,—and there are such,—but he may be a worse philosopher, but he is not a better one than the atheist who denies. On the other hand, the atheist who denies the existence of God on the ground that the nature and the limitations of the human mind are such

An adequate knowledge of the information upon which Ingersoll stood in his understanding of the origin and the meaning and limitations of the law of the first century of our era, there was the Roman Empire, simultaneously with the called Christianity, several widely known whose members claimed to possess the being and the providence of God, the creation and the destiny of man. Known as Gnostics, they were not men, they were knowers.

In 1869, in England, the Metaphysical Club was formed, with Huxley as a member. In his forty-fourth year, he was not one of the most distinguished of scientists: he had known nearly everything of value in the realm of science and philosophy. From the cradle, he was a philosopher. When a mere boy, he had read Guizot's *History of Civilization*, William Hamilton's essay *On the Unconditioned*. In the fertile fields of science he had toiled with all the ardor that youth

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

death; and the more Huxley thought, the green grew.

The Metaphysical Society numbered among its members many other able and variously distinguished men, including Tennyson, Tyndall, Clifford, Sidgwick, Carpenter, Ruskin, Gladstone, the Duke of Argyll, Harrison, Morley, and Stephen. Like the "secular leagues" and "liberal clubs" of America to-day, it was, as Huxley himself described it, a "confraternity of antagonists." There were theists, pantheists, atheists, idealists of all shades, materialists, Freethinkers, and Christians. Like the Gnostics of old, they were not mere believers, they were knowers.

Huxley, the intellectual chemist, examined only one the divers specimens which these modern Gnostics placed in the crucible of his brain, and found that they were all "unknowns." He could not make even a qualitative analysis. That which to the theist or the dogmatic atheist or the idealist was pure gold was, to Huxley, evidently a compound of many inferior elements. Just what those elements were, how united, and in what proportions

manner of the Pharisee, give than not as other men. Rather did he likeness to them—the unique lon position. Indeed, in at least one res to resemble his fellows—to have a that, while the minds of those about in gorgeous robes, the warp and wo been wrought in the loom of theolo and metaphysical fancy, he was “ to cover the nakedness of his cand became meditative, introspective, template himself and his associates. that they “had attained a certain that, consequently, they were his e like the Gnostics. He therefore con was an “Agnostic,” and that the ap principle, or method, in the ascertain was “Agnosticism.” He says:—

“Positively the principle may be expressed: In lect, follow your reason as far as it will take y any other consideration. And negatively: In m do not pretend that conclusions are certain which or demonstrable.”<sup>1</sup>

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

entury. It is one of the milestones on the mental highway. It means honest intelligence—candour added to intellect. It represents a great, a supreme principle—a method for avoiding mental mistakes. Says Kant:—

“The greatest and perhaps the sole use of all philosophy of pure reason is, after all, merely negative, since it serves not as an organ for the enlargement [of knowledge], but as a discipline for its delimitation; and, instead of discovering truth, has only the modest merit of preventing error.”<sup>1</sup>

But Agnosticism, as is shown by my first quotation, from Huxley, is as positive as it is negative. It represents the psychological state in which one declines, or to be strictly accurate, fails, to assert, or to assert the truth of, a proposition in the absence of sufficient evidence.

Agnosticism is a Pasteur filter in the great stream of human thought. The filtrate, that is, the clear and sparkling liquid which passes through, is what we believe. The turbid slush, the pathogenic sediment and scum which does not pass through, is what we do not believe: we cast it out. Ingersoll

quite reached the bed-rock of truth. how the word Agnosticism came into means, and something of what it does let us candidly try to ascertain what presents a mental verity,—a principle of immutable necessity of things.

We have what is called the science of physics. It deals with the contents of mind, the so-called metaphysical distinction to physics, which deals with of substance and energy,—matter in sublime science of metaphysics originated among those wonderful peoples who gave of our present philosophy and theology of course, Christianity, and to whom the title of "heathen." Many individuals especially dogmatic materialistic Frege went to discredit the science; but as he says :—

"Sound metaphysic is an amulet which renders alike against the poison of superstition and the shallow negation; by showing that the affirmations the denials of the latter alike deal with matters of evidence, nothing can be either affirmed or denied."



## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

xagoras, Democritus, Protagoras, Aristotle, Parmenides, Pyrrho, Epicurus, Arcesilaus, Bacon, and especially those of Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Hamilton, Mansel, Comte, Mill, Muxley, Tyndall, and Spencer. But it is hoped that the immeasurably briefer consideration of the relations just mentioned which space here affords will not prove wholly inadequate.

To realize the latter,—to trace the agnostic principle to its origin,—it is necessary that we become oblivious of the physical, or outer, world and enter, for a few moments, the world of mind. Although it may seem egotistic, I shall here write in the first person singular. I shall do this for the sake of simplicity and perspicuity, if not from logical necessity,—rather the latter; for the attentive reader will presently perceive that I could not consistently employ either the second or the third person.

Now, I examine my own mind, and I find that I know two things. First, I know that I exist. How do I know this? Because “I examine my mind.” How could I examine if I did not exist? In other

perception of *phenomena*,—in other states of consciousness, or “psychoses” I know. To put it more briefly still, *phenomena*. Above, below, behind the I cannot logically and honestly go. multitudinous divergent phenomena in my subjective consciousness, through the senses, are mere seemings; whether they represent objective realities, and, if so, whether these realities are different from, or greater than, the phenomena themselves, I do not know. Whether the paper on which I sit, my limbs, my body, are objective realities, or whether they are precisely what they seem to be, I do not and can not know. Why cannot I know? Because everything concerning the contents of my consciousness through one or more of the senses, and be perceived as phenomena. I am where I started. The circle shows that, like Archimedes, my lever is without a fulcrum. Then, shall be my attitude? Shall I affirm or deny the assertion of the idealism of subjective phenomena, there is

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

shall I either assent to or deny the assertion of the theist, that back of subjective phenomena is God, their "Great First Cause"? What shall my attitude? "Whoso has mastered the elements of philosophy knows that the attribute of unquestionable certainty appertains only to the existence of a state of consciousness so long as it exists; \* \* \*. For any demonstration that can be given to the contrary effect, the 'collection of perceptions' which makes up our consciousness may be an ordered phantasmagoria generated by the Ego, unfolding successive scenes on the background of the abyss of nothingness; as a firework, which is but curiously arranged combustibles, grows from a spark into a coruscation, and from a coruscation into figures, and words, and cascades of devouring fire, and then vanishes into the darkness of the night."

"On the other hand, it must no less readily be allowed that, for anything that can be proved to the contrary, there may be a real something which is the cause of all our impressions; that sensations, though not likenesses, are symbols of that something."

attitude? Shall I either assent to the position of the idealist, of the deist, or of the theist? I shall do none of these. I shall say, with Ingersoll, "I do not know."

Now, this one sublime truth, that we do not know, or can positively know, is the noumena, the things (if any) behind the phenomena, "the things in themselves," the ultimate realities, the "Absolute," the "Unconditioned," are unknown and inscrutable. This was the truth which I had in view when, at the close of the last chapter, I proposed to examine the philosophical foundation upon which Ingersoll's agnosticism is based. I repeat, the one sublime truth; and, as the veil has been blotted out, the attitude which it seems to me, must be recognized as the only tenable attitude of the human mind in the face of Ingersoll:—

"Let us be honest with ourselves. In the face of the mysteries; standing beneath the boundless constellations; knowing that each grain of sand, each blade of grass, asks of every mind the answerless question, 'What art thou?' the simplest thing defies solution; feeling that the finite is but a shadow of the infinite, the relative, and that we are forever in the presence of the absolute—let us admit the limitations of our knowledge."





## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

matters, a brain capable of certain things: there were limits within which its processes were confined. Under given conditions, it reached given conclusions—we will say beliefs. These beliefs unavoidably resulted from evidence, as that which is called “weight” results from the gravitation of matter placed upon a scale. As far as he could see, his beliefs,—his weights,—were right, but he did not affirm that they were right; for he recognized the fact that, after all, his brain,—his mental scales,—might be wrong. To him, the assertion that an infinitely wise and powerful Being created and governs this world was a monstrous absurdity, but he did not deny, because, as already stated, he realized that the mental scales in which he was obliged to weigh the evidence for and against might be wrong,—might have erroneously tipped to the negative side. And so he never claimed to know the right weight: he simply read the scales. Moreover, he knew that there were millions of other “scales,” every one differing from his own, and that, consequently, in spite of themselves, they could all give different weights to the same matter.

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRE*

they, like himself, tell them as conclus facts.

By many, Agnosticism is looked upon of philosophical system or anti-theology. It is regarded as collectively representing ideas and doctrines that are more antagonistic to supernaturalism, particularly supernaturalism of Christendom. Its evidently unable to cope with it on fair grounds, would confound it with "infidelity," thereby charging it with such weaknesses as they may be pleased to find in the latter. Over, they would limit it to the theological. Of course, nothing could be more unreasonable. Agnosticism is not infidelity; it is often practised by persons to whom religion have applied the epithet "infidel." Nor is it either a philosophical system or a theological creed. Indeed, it is no more a creed of any sort than a smelter is a brick, or than a threshing-machine is bread; and it is no more limited to theology than gravitation is to apples.



## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

Withholding judgment pending the solution of the problem is the very bulwark of modern science. Will anybody say that this is not the Agnosticism of Ingersoll?

Take the very water that we drink. Prior to 1781, most chemists believed it to be composed of one atom of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen in the molecule. Cavendish, however, was not satisfied,—had not reached a conclusion; and not long after the year mentioned, water was shown to consist of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. Therefore, our knowledge of the molecular structure of water is a result of an application of the agnostic principle in the science of chemistry.

Now, the suspension of judgment on the part of Cavendish must have been due to the fact that his knowledge in the particular branch concerned was greater than that of those who believed the composition of water to have been determined. If this means anything, it means that the difference between his (agnostic) attitude and the (theistic) attitude of his contemporaries in chemistry was simply a difference of knowledge. Cavendish knew more

## *INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION*

invariably a blessing to mankind, and thereupon the bacteriologist should disagree with his visitor. The disagreement would surely be due to a difference of knowledge. Similar examples might be drawn from every other science.

Let us go further. What is the source of the Agnosticism manifested in matters about which nothing is known by anybody? It cannot be a difference of knowledge; for there is no knowledge. If one person declares that the center of the earth is a huge diamond, and another declines from lack of knowledge on the subject, either to affirm or to deny the assertion, what causes the disagreement? What is the source of the Agnosticism manifested by the person who declines either to affirm or to deny? There can be but one answer to this question. It is candor—"the courage of the soul."

Some will claim that this application of the principle of Agnosticism is unjust; that the question chosen is not analogous to the one over which

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

ilate." Extending to the stars his inquiries, he has found no "New Jerusalem"; and from that mystic realm in which all roads converge, still to come the first authentic word. We have no evidence. We may hope; but on this question of questions, the savage is the equal of the sage. Perhaps nothing else illustrates this better than the following story, which Ingersoll himself used to tell in his inimitable way:

A missionary was trying to convince an Indian of the wonderful truths of Christianity. The Indian listened attentively, then stooped and, with a stick, drew a little circle in the sand. "This," said he, "is what Indian knows." Then, tracing a very large circle around the first, he added, "and this is what white man knows; but out here [pointing outside both circles] Indian knows just as much as white man."

But while Ingersoll kept constantly in mind the vast difference between knowledge and belief, while he was ever faithful to the ethical and intellectual agnostic principle, "that it is wrong for

Satisfied with nothing that did not rest on the bed-rock of reason, Ingersoll attacked the question chiefly from two standpoints, the scientific and the philosophical. Starting with the scientific demonstrated truths embraced in "the law of conservation" and "the law of the conservation of energy," namely, that not the minutest increment of matter, nor the least of the total force, or energy, can be annihilated, he drew the conclusion that neither could have been created, and that, therefore, both must have always existed and will forever continue to exist. Or, to state the same facts in a different way: As there can be no force without matter, no matter without force, the two whenever and wherever cognizant to each other being inseparable,—the idea of a creator is a logical absurdity. Because, a being who could create matter could have derived from matter his energy to create, in which case he was not a creator. True, it is even more plainly: If he had energy, he could not be separable from matter—was matter, or a part of matter—and could not have created matter. A being could not have created himself. It is 1

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

Nothing uncaused ever existed. Now, a first cause, if it occurred, was uncaused, which is a contradiction, and therefore absurd. Further, before we can logically speak of a First (uncaused) Cause, we must trace somewhere in the universe a last effect—a "Great Last Effect." Let us, as a test, apply this reasoning to some everyday phenomenon. Suppose that a child is suffering from an incurable congenital disease which has produced certain structural changes in the brain or other part of the nervous system. These changes will surely give rise to symptoms,—will cause the conduct of the individual to deviate from what is called "normal." Imagine, now, that some theistic sociologist, eager to establish the falsity of Ingersoll's position, is to undertake a conception of the last effect that the lesion in the nervous system of this child will have upon society! Would he not press the snow-lie upon common sense? And yet theologians, lawyers, statesmen, scientists, physicians (who, above all, should be wiser), babble about a First Cause as glibly as a merchant gossips over a commodity.

we ourselves are a part, was one eternal, as can be known, planless and purposeless, which, by virtue of its composition, is otherwise than as it is; every part, planet, obeying the law of necessity, the possibility of miracle, chance, or accident, the sublime yet awful mechanism, the substance and energy must remain forever the same, though forms change and manifestations vary. Coal might be converted into heat, the heat into steam, the steam into motion, the motion into heat, and changed back to heat, and so forth. The totality of matter and energy would not be changed. A molecule of iron, liberated by chlorine from one of its chlorides, entering the blood, uniting with the coloring matter (hemoglobin) of the red blood-cells, might so modify the human thought as to assist in the production of a new poem. In such a case, the total amount of iron would be lessened, but the total amount of iron and chlorine would remain the same. This same iron, centuries after the poem was written, might be gathered up by the roots of a plant, and pass again through human veins.

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

ty, "the mother of the world,"<sup>1</sup> by that which examined in the light of pure reason, is, at best, only a useless and superfluous conception. In other words, the belief that behind the totality of objective sensations which we call the universe lies an independent power, was not wonderful, nor even radical." But the opposite belief, that the universe, in which substance and energy are inseparable and eternal; in which not the mentally highest and morally best, but the physically fittest, survive—the ignorant and vicious often triumphing over the intellectual and innocent; in which, from the astronomical to the microscopical,—from wheeling Neptune to bacterial spore,—Necessity reigns omnipotent, is the sport and prey of some capricious immaterial nothing—this, to Ingersoll, was the real cause for wonder.

From the preceding, it of course follows, that contrary to his superficial theological critics, Ingersoll did not and could not entertain even the faintest idea of "accident," or "chance," in relation to universal phenomena. Such an idea can be held only by those who fail to recognize the unity

to *one*. He knew that all such terms imply plurality. "Accidents" and "happenings" are used with reference to two or more, but not with reference to one.

The simple and logical truth of the matter is that the charge of postulating the accidentality of reference to cosmogonic processes is laid, not at Ingersoll's door, but at the door of the theological critics. Chance and accident are not implied, not by belief in the infinite divisibility of existence and persistence of substance, but by such words as "creation" and "destruction." Indeed, to believe in the possibility of the phenomena which these words indicate, is to believe in chance and accident, and in nothing but chance and accident. He who believes in substance and energy, believes in necessity; he who believes in creation and destruction, believes in caprice: necessity means order; caprice means disorder.

Perhaps nothing else more clearly demonstrates the depth of Ingersoll's philosophic grasp and insight than his conception of natural law. In that conception he did what most of his critics, and even the most scientific writers, fail to do: he distinguished between the



## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

was limited to the observation of only this side of the phenomenon, and that even should he ascertain the cause, the cause of that cause would logically demand an explanation. Confronted with the insuperable difficulties, he did not seek relief in vain confusion of terms. He did not confound man-made law,—that is, a mental perception of a phenomenal sequence,—with its cause, and announce that he had discovered God. He did not build him a philosophical palace of “fool’s gold” mined in a muddled brain. He chose to start modestly and candidly in the open light of reason. He said:—

“Let it be understood that by the term Law is meant the same variable relations of succession and resemblance predicated of all facts arising from like conditions. Law is a fact—not a cause. It is a fact, that like conditions produce like results: this fact is Law. When we say that the universe is governed by law, we mean that this fact, called law, is incapable of change; that it is, has been, and forever will be, the same inexorable, immutable Fact, inseparable from the phenomena. Law, in this sense, was not enacted or made. It could not have been otherwise than as it is. That which necessarily exists has no creator.” (i 108) <sup>1</sup>

And yet writers and speakers of the dualist

in no essential respect from their cor  
civil law. Frequently are they charg  
such expressions as: "Evolution unfol  
regular order, in obedience to natural law  
law of gravity holds the planets in th  
and so forth.

The truth is, that nothing occurs  
because of, or in obedience to, law.  
*obeys* no law or laws. If it *obeys* "nat  
now, what did it obey before there wer  
ural laws? and what would it obey if  
should be forgotten? All we can tru  
is, that evolution is a universal and o  
nomenon of what we call substance a  
Its cause or causes are within, behind,  
the latter; its laws are in the human m  
paper. As to the next proposition, if "  
gravity holds the planets in their orbits,"  
them before Newton's time? What l  
the earth while he was discovering tha  
would be a safe wager, that the law of gr  
not "hold" a mustard-seed.

"But what about this confusion of  
terms?—what harm is done by conf

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

philosophy. It tends to denial of the integrity of nature, thereby affording standing-room for the supernatural. How? In this way: Socialized individuals are accustomed to obeying civil law. To the extent that they obey unwillingly, they come to regard law as force. The less intelligent they are, the more will they so regard it. Furthermore, these individuals know that laws have not always existed; that they have had makers, creators. Now, if we use the term law in the sense of force or cause,—if, for example, we speak of a falling stone's obeying the law of gravity, as a person obeys a law of the state,—we establish in the mind of the uncritical, through the inevitable association of ideas, the necessity for a creator of the law which the stone is said to obey; because it is unthinkable that a law, in the usual sense, could create itself. No other thinker understood this more clearly than Hergersoll.

Convinced by his earnest studies in physics and science, and by careful observation of sociological phenomena, that the scientific, or monistic, conception of nature, already mentioned, is the only

logical view was, at best, a sort of men. His intellectual horizon was too broad for the idea of special providence that, for example, God had edged the necessity of raising up a Lincoln, who should break the fetters of an enslaved nation, and a nation's soil ran red with innocent blood, who should then, untimely, find a martyr, through the medium of an assassin's bullet. Ingersoll could see no reason for having perished for a race to be enslaved in the first place.

He read with scorn and pity the various "divine evidences," the "fundamental truths," the "analogies." Examining Paley's wonderful watch, he found that it did not keep time with the clock of this age, and that it afforded no greater proof of conviction than Aladdin's wonderful lamp. He possessed, to a rare degree, the faculty of seeing things as they are. Recognizing the law of correspondence, he knew that knowledge of a part implied, with him, knowledge of the whole; and, as he saw that the human mind is limited, he knew that to assert the existence of any thing or phenomenon in nature is to assert its existence. He knew that we must understand causes before we can understand effects, and that we must understand the children of necessity before we can understand the children of chance.

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

they were superficially apparent. They never took him farther on the turnpike of teleology than where the path of Agnosticism branches off. He said:—

“In nature I see, or seem to see, good and evil—intelligence and ignorance—goodness and cruelty—care and carelessness—economy and waste. I see means that do not accomplish the ends—designs that seem to fail.” (iv 55)

For example, although recognizing apparent design, as far as the welfare of the microbe itself is concerned, he could not believe that any wise and beneficent purpose is subserved by the bacterium which thrives in dust and soil, and, fortuitously entering the tissues of man, or of some lower mammal, causes the horrible disease called “lockjaw.” Considering all the known facts regarding this micro-organism, he could not think otherwise than that the part played by it is, to say the least, a most useless one. But he would not attempt to account for the existence of this germ. He was satisfied that, like all other things, it necessarily exists—that it is—and that the deplorable

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION*

He was therefore able to realize the utter loneliness, the insignificance, the nothingness in the midst of an infinite environment, neither malice to gratify nor mercy to relieve. He felt the pathos of human existence. Nothing could make us more certain than this following:—

“A heart breaks, a man dies, a leaf falls in the farthest corner of the world, and the great world sweeps on.” (xii 449)

It would be difficult to find in literature a more tragically pathetic line.

Upon whatever of nature's phenomena he looked, whatever of them he contemplated, he intuitively saw how little she does with regard to man. He saw that whatever brings weal to one brings weal to another,—and that it befalls without intention. He knew that the pest, in whitecapped horror raging,—launched with implacable fury the helpless ship on reefs,—strewing the pallid corpses on the shore,—also hasten to a mother's arms her long suffering child, and that somewhere, its fury spent, it

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

ague, mysterious depths,—through wrecks  
vessels manned by fleshless crews,—over craters  
whose fiery hearts long since were quenched,—  
across the sightless valleys where frondage waves  
without a flower through all the ceaseless years  
—onward still, to thrill some distant soul with joy.  
Not the most entrancing feature of nature's endless  
panorama could make him forget, that, notwithstanding  
the blessings which we experience,—the few fleet moments  
when Joy, with rosy lips, defying, mocks at Fate,—this  
life is a heartless maelstrom in which millions of  
mankind are caught. When he saw the dawn,—saw the  
somber granite bastile of the east, trembling, change  
to rubicund, and old and topple down,—saw the sun,  
the unprimed god, walk scornful the fallen ruins  
into the palace with sapphire domed and with diamond  
strewn,—he thought of what had just occurred  
on the other side of the globe. He was not content  
to know that this sun had come to weave for another  
day a robe of verdure for the fields and hills  
to vie with its old companion in building fair  
farms where babbling brooks are canonied with

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION*

life from millions of animal and vegetable life, and that, in the Orient, it had been shot into arrows of thirsting fire into waterless wells, in which Famine sat with hollow cheeks and staring eyes.

Thus convinced of the relativity of all things in nature, Ingersoll naturally believed that there was nothing absolutely good, nothing absolutely bad, and that, outside the planless, ever-changing process of the universe, there is no watchful power to guide or bless mankind. He held that man's ideas of good and evil had been inferred from the results of phenomena; those things tending to happiness being called good; those to unhappiness being called evil. He once illustrated this phase of his belief by the fable of the egotism of man, with the following fable:—

“A colony of red ants lived at the foot of the Alps. One day that an avalanche destroyed the hill; and one of the ants was heard to remark: ‘Who could have taken so much to destroy our home?’” (iii 287)

Ingersoll was wise enough to see that neither rejoices nor regrets, and that the



## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

morning; and the sun streamed through a window and fell against the closed door, imparting, as it passed, a fairer gold to the careless locks of a little girl, who thought her papa "asleep." I recall these words of Ingersoll: "The sun shines as gladly on coffins as on cradles."

Unlike his two distinguished predecessors, Voltaire and Paine, Ingersoll was not, in the strictest sense, a pioneer in the struggle for intellectual freedom. In justice to him, however, it should be remembered that, although he came at a later date and consequently possessed better tools with which to do his work, his opportunities were not so great. In addition to the influence exerted by the reformers mentioned, and by such thinkers and writers as Buckle, Draper, Lecky, Büchner, and Spencer, modern physical science was, at the beginning of Ingersoll's anti-theological crusade, rapidly becoming the handmaid of rationalism. The great masters,—the real Titans and Hercules—were hurling thunderbolts of truth at all the monsters of superstition.

One of the most splendid achievements was the

INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPRECIATION

calling, that, for more than six hundred years, Christian darkness, mental disease was believed to be the work of evil spirits. I need not go further upon the sad annals of mental therapeutics.

In 1859 Charles Darwin, "the Newton of biology," after whom Ingersoll himself named the last century should be named, established the theory of descent, relegating forever the ignorant past all "special creation" myths.

Next came Kirchhoff and Bunsen, who in 1860, a series of investigations which was followed by Fraunhofer, by spectral analysis, through millions of miles of space, the existence of other planets of the same chemical elements that we find in our earth and its atmosphere.

Three years later Huxley, "Darwin's Bulldog," declared unmistakably, in *Man's Place in Nature*, his opinion that man descended from the apes. Huxley supported his beliefs by most convincing biological facts.

Tyndall also—he of the "prayer-gauge"—demonstrated alike the credulity of Christians and the immutability of natural laws.

## *HIS PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATION*

of literature ; with personal and political experience that had not tended to increase his affection for orthodoxy ; and with his mind still alive to the vivid impressions of the struggle for physical freedom, Robert G. Ingersoll,—“like an arm warrior, like a plumed knight,”—entered the mental lists and shook “his shining lance” the enemies of intellectual liberty.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY FIFTY YEARS AGO'? OR DID HE ATTACK THE CHRISTIANITY OF HIS TIME?*

**A** CRITICISM very frequently made by those who seem to have in view the chief object of belittling Ingersoll's efforts in strengthening their own position is, that he had no familiarity with the achievements of modern biblical scholarship,—the so-called "higher criticism,"—and that, consequently, it was not the Christianity of his day which he opposed, but rather, the Christianity, or theology, 'of fifty years ago.' And this assertion is made in view of the fact that much of his time was devoted to the discussion of the character and teachings of "the new religion" from the aspersions of theology. It is

## *DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST*

oo, blind to the results of the higher criticism and therefore unable to recognize that the Great Agnostic did not come legitimately within the range? And if the arguments which they sought to meet were not directed against the Christian religion proper, is it not logical to expect the Christian critics to disclaim, as foreign to the system, all that Ingersoll opposed, and to claim only to so much thereof as he did not oppose? The Christian world ready to take this step?

Assuming, however, that there is reason for questioning Ingersoll's attitude toward the genuine Christian doctrines, let us carefully consider some of his arguments in the premises. To insure perfect clearness, we will begin with what is believed to be not only a basic, but an absolutely indispensable quotation from the Great Agnostic himself:—

"Among the evangelical churches there is a substantial agreement upon what they consider the fundamental truths of the gospel. The fundamental truths, as I understand them, are:

"That there is a personal God, the creator of the material universe; that he made man of the dust, and woman from part of the man; that the man and woman were tempted by the devil; that they were turned out of the Garden of Eden; that, about fifteen hundred years after

## *INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APP.*

Palestine ; that he preached for about three years to place, occasionally raising the dead, curing the blind, that he was crucified—for the crime of blasphemy—proposed, but that, as a matter of fact, he was offered up for the sins of all who might have faith in him ; that he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, where he now sits in session for his followers ; that he will forgive the sins of those who believe on him, and that those who do not believe will be cast into the dungeons of eternal pain. These—it may be well said—are the sacraments of Baptism and the Last Supper—generally known as the Christian religion.” (vi 4)

To demonstrate by quotations from the Bible, or otherwise, that he produced exhaustive evidence in refutation of each of the so-called “truths” of Christianity would be a task specially impossible, but unnecessary. It would be unnecessary for the reason that, having refuted the first of these “truths,” he refuted the logical implication, not only all the “truths” of those of every other religion, naturally, but of the natural. I shall therefore present such only of the “truths” in question as are universally conceded to be indispensable to the Christian religion.

Now, although I have previously



## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

"Is it possible for the human mind to conceive of an infinite personality? Can it imagine a beginningless being, powerful and intelligent? If such a being existed, there must have been an eternity during which nothing did exist before it, because, if the Universe was created, there must have been a time when it was not, and back of that there must have been a time during which nothing but an infinite personality existed. Is it possible to imagine an infinite intelligence dwelling in a finite nothing? How could such a being be intelligent? What could there be to be intelligent about? There was but one thing, namely, that there was nothing except this being. How could a being be powerful? There was nothing to exert power over. There was nothing in the universe to suggest a power. There could not exist—except the relation between infinite intelligence and infinite nothing." (xi 239)

As before stated, it of course follows from this conclusion, and its implication, that, in endeavoring to prove the existence of the God of the Bible is untenable. Ingersoll endeavored to prove that the Christian doctrine of a "special creation" of man is untenable. He was anxious to show that he left no room for doubt; that he took no chances with the inconsistency of mankind; that, there was no solitary point upon the ground at which he failed to plant a nail. I shall give, in his own words,



## *DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST*

onment, to the "skyish head" of Olympian reason from which he viewed the superstitions of mankind. He said:—

"Then I studied biology—not much—just enough to know something of animal forms, enough to know that life existed when the Laurentian rocks were made—just enough to know that implements of stone, implements that had been formed by human hands, had been found mingled with the bones of extinct animals, bones that had been split with these implements, and that these animals had ceased to exist hundreds of thousands of years before the manufacture of Adam and Eve." (iv 34)

After thus showing that neither the purely biblical, nor any theological, account of man's "special creation" can by any possibility whatsoever be accepted as chronologically true, he presented the scientific explanation of our origin; and he marshals his facts as a general marshals his battalions:—

"If matter and force are from eternity, then we can say that man had no intelligent creator, that man was not a special creation. "We now know, if we know anything, that Jehovah, the divine Potter, did not mix and mould clay into the forms of men and women and then breathe the breath of life into these forms. "We now know that our first parents were not foreigners. V

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

organism, from [with] one vague want, to a single cell, to a hollow ball filled with fluid, to a cup with double bottom, to a worm, to a something that begins to breathe, to a something that has a spinal chord, to a link between the invertebrate and the vertebrate, to one that has a cranium—a house for the brain, with fins, still onward to one with fore and hinder legs, to the [reptilia, to the] mammalia, to the marsupials, to the birds, to the animals in trees, to the simiae, to the pithecanthropi, and so on. (iv 500)

The next of the alleged “fundamental principles” which is sufficiently important to require notice here is, that Jehovah wrought a vast number of miracles. Following Ingersoll’s argument of the eternal and inexorable persistence of spirit and energy, an elaborate demonstration of which he sought to prove that all miracles are unnecessary would be a work of supererogation. We shall therefore introduce only a few of his own statements on the subject:—

“Jehovah, according to the Scriptures, wrought hundreds of miracles for the benefit of the Jews.” (ii 451) “Mr. Locke was once saying: ‘Define your terms.’ So the first question was, ‘What is a miracle?’ (viii 507)? “An act performed by a man without reference to the facts in nature. This is the only definition of a miracle.

## *DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST*

those who stand in front, would be a miracle. To make an answer a question would be a miracle. In other words, to do anything contrary to or without regard to the facts in nature is to perform a miracle." (iv 305)

Having thus given what he believes to be "the only honest definition of a miracle," and having cited several phenomena the production of which would constitute miracles, he proceeds, with the weapons of science and logic, to demonstrate the impossibility. He says:—

"Now we are convinced of what is called the 'uniformity of nature.' We believe that all things act and are acted upon in accordance with their nature; that under like conditions the results will always be substantially the same; that like ever has and ever will produce like. We now believe that events have natural parents and that none are childless." (iv 306) "Science asserts the absolute, the unvarying uniformity of nature." (ii 459)

"If, again, we take the ground of some of the more advanced clergy, that a miracle is in accordance with the facts in nature, but with facts unknown to man, then we are compelled to say that a miracle is performed by a divine sleight-of-hand; as, for instance, that our senses are deceived; or, that it is perfectly simple to this higher intelligence, while inexplicable to us. If we give this explanation, then man has been imposed upon by a superior intelligence. It is as though one acquainted with the sciences—with the action of electricity—should excite the wonder of savages by sending messages to his partner

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APP*

dealt with the assertion, that "God is born on earth as a child born of the Virgin Mary," and that "probably all Christians, except a small number of Christian Scientists and Unitarians, have been saying, having been said, by Fawcett, to represent the drollest of compromises between Christianity and Agnosticism"), will admit that Jesus Christ, as the divine Son of God, is the basis of Christianity. Indeed, it is inconceivable that any one outside the Christian Science churches should deny that the miracle of birth, life, crucifixion, resurrection, and the return of Christ are the very foundations of the Christian edifice, and that to put underneath this edifice a mite of denial is to leave Christendom to fall and perish in a heap of theological ruins.

Now, it is not even remotely surprising that an average person who has read Ingersoll's arguments in opposition to the theory of a Creator, or God of the Bible, will conclude that it is possible that the Great Agnostic believes in a God,—a Jesus Christ,—in the true sense. But as there may be readers

## *DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PA*

of that union. Nobody ever believed the contrary until he had been dead at least one hundred and fifty years." (ii 390) "In order to place themselves on an equality with Pagans they started the doctrine of divinity, and also took the second step requisite in that course. First, a god for his father, and second, a virgin for his mother. This was the Pagan combination of greatness, and the Christians added to this that Christ was God." (xi 296) "Neither Matthew, Mark, or Luke ever dreamed that he was of divine origin. He did not say so to either Matthew, Mark, or Luke, or to any one in their hearing. He said he was the Son of God, or that he was miraculously conceived, but he did not say it. It may be asserted that he said it to John, but John did not write the gospel that bears his name. The angel Gabriel, who they say, brought the news, never wrote a word upon the subject. The mother of Christ never wrote a word upon the subject. His alleged father never wrote a word upon the subject, and John never admitted the story. We are lacking in the matter of witnesses. \* \* \*

"At that time Matthew and Luke believed that Christ was the son of Joseph and Mary. And why? They say he descended from David, and in order to show that he was of the blood of David, Matthew gave the genealogy of Joseph. And if Joseph was not his father, why did they not give the genealogy of Pontius Pilate or of Herod? Or, if they, by giving the genealogy of Joseph, show that he was of the blood of David if Joseph was in no way related to Christ? And yet this is the position into which the Christian world is driven." (ii 390)

And elsewhere, after pointing out that Apollo, Baldur, Chrishna, Hercules, Samson, Osiris, Isis, Prometheus, Zoroaster, Lao-tsze, and many other gods

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX*

that "nearly all were worshiped by " that "all of them fasted for forty them taught in parables—all of the miracles—all met with a violent death from the dead," he declares:—

"The history of these gods is the history of our Christ."

"This is not a coincident—an accident. Christ was a new name for an old biography—a sun-god. Christ was not a man but a myth-legend."

And he also declared:—

"There is not, in all the contemporaneous literature, a single word about Christ or his apostles. The parable is admitted to be an interpolation, and the letters, trial, and several other documents forged by the fathers, are now admitted to be false." (vi 85)

And he asks, in a tone that brings answer:—

"Is it not wonderful that Josephus, the best historian produced, says nothing about the life or death of Christ?" (vi 84)

Having shown that Ingersoll den-

## *WILL HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST'*

ere present any of the Great Agnostic's arguments concerning the wonders wrought by the Nazarene concerning his crucifixion, resurrection, or ascension. Nevertheless, as a majority would doubtless not be satisfied with the bare knowledge of Inge's final conclusion that Jesus was merely a myth,—a sun-god,—and as it is deemed important to make as clear as possible the former's position on the entire subject, I propose to go somewhat further, presenting next his contention, that, even if Christ did exist in physical form, he was a man and nothing more:—

"I do not believe that Christ ever claimed to be divine; ever claimed to be inspired; ever claimed to work a miracle. In short, I believe that he was an honest man. These claims were all put in his mouth by others—by mistaken friends, by ignorant worshipers, by zealous and credulous followers, and sometimes by dishonest and designing priests." (vii 131)

and elsewhere he inquires:—

"How could any man now, in any court, by any known rule of evidence, substantiate one of the miracles of Christ?" (ii 398)

"How could we prove, for instance, the miracle of the loaves and fishes? There were plenty of other loaves and other fishes in the world."

## *INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPR*

Ingersoll makes an observation that detracts from his reputation as a judge of human nature :—

“If you should tell a man that the dead were raised a few years ago, he would probably say : ‘Yes, I know that.’ But if you say that a hundred thousand years from now all the dead will be raised, he might say : ‘Probably they will.’ But if you should tell him that you saw a dead man raised and given life that day, he would call you the name of the insane asylum from which you had been discharged.”

Again :—

“There is one wonderful thing about the dead who have been raised—we do not hear of them any more. What has happened to them? \* \* \* They did not even excite interest when they were first raised. Nobody said, ‘Why, that man is not afraid to go back there once. He has walked through the valley of the dead.’ It was a word. They pass quietly away.” (ii 393)

“I do not believe these miracles,” says the Great Agnostic, in language which shows his attitude with reference to miracles and fiction :—

“There was a man who did all these things, and he was crucified him. Let us be honest. Suppose a man came back and should meet a funeral procession, and say, ‘What



*DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST*

life's, and the little children with their arms around his neck ; do you think that the people of this city would kill him ? Do you think any man would wish to crucify him ? Do you not rather believe that even the people who had a loved one out in that cemetery would go to him, even upon their knees, and beg him to give back their dead ? Do you believe that any man was ever crucified who was the master of death ? (394)

"It is infinitely absurd to say that a man who cured the sick, the lame and blind, raised the dead, cast out devils, controlled the winds and waves, created food and held obedient to his will the forces of the world, was put to death by men who knew his superhuman power and who had seen his wondrous works. If the crucifixion was public, the miracles were private. If the miracles had been public, the crucifixion could not have been." (ii 399)

Of course, if there was no crucifixion, there was no resurrection ; but justice to Ingersoll himself and consideration for his critics, alike demand that we here note at least the gist of his thought on this phase of our subject :—

"The miracle of the resurrection I do not and cannot believe." (i 390) "Why ? Because it is altogether more reasonable to believe that the people were mistaken about it than that it happened. And why ? Because, according to human experience, we know that people will not always tell the truth, and we never saw a miracle ourselves and we must be governed by our experience ; and if we go by our experience, we must say that the miracle never happened—that the w

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

taken money to falsely swear that his body had been buried? Why did he not make another triumphal entry into Jerusalem? Why did he not say to the multitude: 'He is in my feet, and in my hands, and in my side. I am dead, but I have not been buried. I have endeavored to kill, but Death is my slave?' Simply the Resurrection is a myth." (ii 400)

We find also, that the acme and triumph of the life of Christ,—the gravity-scornful ascent, known as the ascension,—met at the end of Ingersoll no better fate. We find it subjected to the same analysis as other miracles. As to its improbability, he says:—

"After the story of the Resurrection, the Ascension is the next necessity. They had to dispose of the body." (iii 401) "To believe in the miracle of the ascension, in the bodily ascent of Christ. Where was he going? In the light shed upon the subject by the telescope, I again ask, where was he going? Jerusalem is not above us. The abode of the gods is not above us. Where was he going? Which way did he go? Of course he went in the time of day he left. If he left in the evening, he went the opposite way from that he would have gone had he left in the morning. What did he do with his body? How high did he go? What way did he overcome the intense cold? The distance to the moon, two hundred and forty thousand miles away, where did he go? He must have had a natural body, the same body that died. His body must have been buried. He would not, as he now have, circled with the earth."

## *DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST*

not believe it, or, having seen it, thought it too unimportant to record. To this wonder of wonders Mark devotes one verse: 'So then, after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right-hand of God.' Can we believe that this verse was written by one who witnessed the ascension of Jesus Christ; by one who watched his Master slowly rising through the air till distance hid him from his tearful sight? Luke, another of the witnesses, says, 'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.' John corroborates Matthew saying nothing on the subject. Now, we find that the last chapter of Mark, after the eighth verse, is an interpolation; so that Mark really says nothing about the occurrence. Either the ascension of Christ must be given up, or it must be admitted that the witnesses do not agree, and that three of them never heard of that most stupendous event." (vi 86)

It seems necessary to indicate Ingersoll's position in relation to but one more of the alleged "fundamental truths," namely, that Christ "was offered as a sacrifice for the sins of all who might have faith in him."

In discussing the atonement, Ingersoll begins as in everything else, at the bottom. He declares that the doctrine is "far older than our religion" and that, while it is not even hinted at by Matthew, Mark, or Luke, "the necessity of belief, the atonement, and the scheme of salvation are all s-

## *INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APP*

priest would lay his hands upon the animal, which the sins of the man would be transferred; that the animal would be in the place of the real sinner; and that when the blood had been sprinkled upon the altar, God was satisfied. (ii 313) Ingersoll says

“Every priest became a butcher, and every sanctuary a house of blood. Nothing could be more utterly shocking to a loving soul. Nothing could have been better calculated to harden the heart than this continual shedding of innocent blood. The system is supposed to have culminated in the sacrifice of Isaac. The blood took the place of all other. It is necessary to satisfy the law. The law at last is satisfied, satiated, surfeited. The law that wants blood is at the bottom of the atonement, the most fearful savagery.” (vi 17)

And Ingersoll declares:—

“We are told that the first man committed a sin, and his posterity are responsible,—in other words, that we are guilty and can be justly punished for a sin we never committed. This absurdity was the father of another, namely, that God rewarded for a good action done by another. Good modern theologians, made a law, with the penalty of death for its infraction. All men, they say, have broken this law, and the economy of heaven, this law had to be vindicated. To do this, God damned the whole human race. Through what

## *DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST*

onement, an expiation, for the sins of all who might believe on him (i 16)

After this expression of Ingersoll's views concerning the origin and development of the atonement, it is important that we should know his opinion as to the wisdom and justice of that institution, when examined in the light of our knowledge of cause and effect in human conduct and relations:—

"We are told that the sinner is in debt to God, and that the obligation is discharged by the Savior." (ii 315) " \* \* \* how \* \* \* is possible to make the suffering of the innocent a justification for the criminal?" (vi 18) "If I rob Mr. Smith, and God forgives me, how does that help Smith? If I, by slander, cover some poor girl with the reproach of some imputed crime, and she withers away like a blighted flower and afterward I get the forgiveness of God, how does that help her?" (i 520) "The best that can be said of such a transaction is that the debt is transferred, not paid. As a matter of fact, the sinner is in debt to the person he has injured." (ii 315) "Even when forgiven by the one you have injured, it is not as though the injury had never been done." (i 521) "We must remember that in nature there are neither rewards nor punishments—there are consequences. The life and death of Christ do not constitute an atonement." (ii 315) "We are not accountable for the sins of 'Adam' and the virtues of Christ cannot be transferred to us. There can be no vicarious virtue, no vicarious vice." (ii 473)

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APP.*

With the preceding sentence, I conclude the arguments which I have chosen to present in support of Ingersoll's position in relation to such questions,—of the alleged "fundamental truths" which are universally conceded to be indisputable in the Christian religion. Considering the vast and bountiful field in which selections could be made, I have, of course, given only a comparatively small number of the arguments advanced by the Great Dissenter. The several "truths" that it is deemed necessary to mention; but, in my opinion, even these will indubitably prove, that Ingersoll attacks not 'the Christianity, or theology, of fifty years ago, but the Christianity of his ripest years; not only the Christianity of August 11, 1899, but the Christianity of July 21, 1899, or the Christianity that ceased to be a supernatural religion, and came merely a code of morals.

If there be those who still believe in the existence of a legitimate Christianity, or, indeed, of a supernatural religion of any form, who have not yet read, did not fairly and uncompromisingly read, at first hand, the only way

*DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST*

held; every inch of the vast Christian edifice, from the shattered and crumbling foundation-stones, the tarnished and toppling dome; every point "essential" or otherwise; every so-called "fundamental truth"; every particle of "evidence" absolutely everything connected with the Christian system,—from its inconceivable First Cause, creator of substance and energy, to its unsychological and impossible "scheme" of atonement and paradise through faith,—from its barbaric and idiotic cosmogony, to its unthinkable heaven. They will find, in addition to the specific arguments which we have quoted, multitudinous ones to show that the God or Gods of our Bible, like all other gods, instead of being creators, were themselves creations of barbarians, in a barbaric age—wombed in mental night, long before the first pale star trembled in the east of thought; that, in the biblical account of creation, contradictory to science and repugnant to common sense, there is nothing new; that it is unique to the extent that (according to Jews and Christians) it was copied into other similar accounts.

the race. They will find, in full, the Gnostic's contention, that biblical inspiration is a pious pretension,—a poor, scarce viabl left by priestcraft on the doorsteps of during the long night of the past ; the question, after all, is not whether the inspired, but whether it is true ; that if there is no inspiration, but that if merely human brains should have been inspired, they should have been made precisely alike, anatomically, physiologically, psychologically, in order to attach to it the same interpretation. Far from being "the Book of Books," it is a mingling of good and bad, of the monstrous and the absurd ; that it is an infallible guide of the human relations whatsoever ; that its literature, as philosophy, it is infinitely more than Shakespeare's "book and volume of" and that, confined in its blood-stained, slave-tracked lids, it lies to-day upon the path of progress the greatest stumbling-block of the race.

Let them read the twelve books of



*DID HE ATTACK 'THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAST*

y the pseudo-religious, pseudo-scientific, vacillating, abashed, and vertebrateless apologists.

They will find, in unmistakable words, the Greek Agnostic's contention that, in the mental temple of the really intelligent and unprejudiced, the figure of Christ can no longer occupy the topmost niche; that, in his teachings, there is absolutely nothing new,—nothing that had not been taught hundreds of years before; that in none of the attributes which we revere was he superior to Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Confucius, Lao-tsze, Socrates, or even Cicero; that, if we weigh in the scales of reason, observation, and experience all the supposed sayings of Christ, we are compelled to state, that, while many of them contain the profoundest, tenderest, noblest, and loftiest thoughts, many others are absurd, impracticable, inhuman, and heartless; that Christ uttered no word in favor of the home,—no word in favor of science or education,—no word in favor of physical or intellectual liberty; and that he was ignorant of the very existence of the Western Hemisphere, although it was destined to become the hope and glory of the

nothing good which is absent from the religions,—nothing good which is not an adequate code of morals ; that Christianity “furnished new steam for an old engine” ; its divine personages are “foreigners” ; its purgatory, hell, and heaven, its rites, its holy days, its forms, symbols, and ceremonies, only the revamped garments, the borrowings and paraphernalia, of paganism. For example, baptism was practised long before Christ was born ; that the Hindoos, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans had holy communion, the eucharist is pagan ; and that the girdle at the waist of the priest is a pendent plate.

They will also find in the twelve books of Ingersoll the contention, that Christianity is psychologically and untenable—that its practical impracticability is evident in the conduct of the Christian nation, which, although professing the borrowed Golden Rule and the doctrine of non-resistance (itself impracticable and continually resisting with mailed and bayoneted sabres) that Christianity has always persecuted

## CHAPTER XII.

### *WAS HE 'A MERE ICONOCLAST'?*

Did He 'Tear Down without Building Up'?

THERE IS another criticism that is even more frequently made than the one which the preceding chapter is devoted to. It holds, season after season, a conspicuous place in the repertoire of every itinerant polemic and every zealous and sensational pulpiter. To charge the figure, it is the handiest arrow in the quiver of our orthodox warrior. Scores of times has the reader heard it; for it is on the lips of nearly every believer, who either thoughtlessly repeats it after another, or who, fancying it to be as profound and convincing as it is convenient, and knowing nothing of the basic truths and principles of rationalism, has coined it from his own crude mental or

to is, that Ingersoll, wholly unlike the reformers who have carved their names in marble of memory, was 'a mere iconoclast'; he was not constructive, but destructive (to echo the words of the multitude) "He tore down without building up"; that "he took and gave nothing in return."

It was stated by Ingersoll himself, "The relation between things and thoughts is the relation between thoughts and thoughts." (x) In order, therefore, to decide as to the justness of the criticism in question, it will be necessary to ascertain: first, the "things" or the "thoughts" represented by the word "iconoclast"; second, the "things" or the "thoughts" represented by the life-work of Ingersoll. And if we find that he was an iconoclast,—if we find that he was an iconoclast,—it will be necessary to ascertain, further, in what way, if any, and to what extent, he differed from other great men whose theories and actions were in counter to the popular tendencies of the age.

Now, what is an "iconoclast"? It comes from the Greek *eikon*, an image, and

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

standard dictionary. Have we found a "relation"—was Ingersoll an iconoclast? For once, we are obliged to agree with his critics: he was.

But was iconoclasm all for which he stood? Was it his sole ambition? Was his life a negation? Is a cipher, woven of the withering vine of faith and fable, the only wreath that can be laid upon his tomb? Let us see.

To begin with: Robert G. Ingersoll came into this world endowed as few men ever have been endowed. He came with the analytic and synthetic powers of the logician, the intuitive insight and the astronomic scope of the philosopher, and the vision of the poet. Moreover, he had in his composition that few men of great intellect have had,—the "touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin,"—a heart absolutely sincere,—a heart incapable of wilful wrong,—a heart filled with divine enthusiasm for our race.

With such a native dowry, he would have become great as a humanitarian, even without any advantages of youthful environment. I say, "even without any advantages of youthful environment

of at least a few books—things which he did not have. And, what was doubly true, those few books were the very ones which every speculative Voltaire should read. They were the Bible, the commentators Adam Clarke and MacKnight, Cruden's *Concordance*, *Institutes*, Paley's *Evidences*, Edwards' *Discourses*, Jenkyn on the *Atonement*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Pollok's *Courses of Time*, "many volumes of orthodox sermons, *Martyrs*, the *History of the Waldenses*, *Progress*, Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted*, Butler's *Analogy*. And Ingersoll read them, each and all, throughout his youth.

And besides the circumstances just mentioned, there was another advantage: his surroundings were purely, profoundly religious. Therefore, when he reached the age of early manhood, he possessed, in addition to a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of the basic principles of Christian theology, a practical knowledge of its workings. The result, we may add, be it noted, was not theoretical

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

choly vision, or rather, a background of men  
night, on which, shining from the realm of  
ideal, appeared the fair figures of Freedom  
Science, beneath "the seven-hued arch" of ho  
His horizon grew wide and grand. He beca  
a circumnavigator of the intellectual globe,  
mental Magellan. Like the latter, he had s  
the shadow on the moon,—the theological mo  
—and he believed, in spite of the warnings  
admonitions of the stupidly wise and timid, t  
the world of mind is round. And he demonstra  
the reasonableness of his belief. Starting with  
idea that there were, in the dim and far-off sea  
thought, lands fairer and grander than the narr  
barren, rock-bound island of Christian theolo  
he returned with his views confirmed, and e  
strengthened. He visited the sublime continen  
—the archipelagoes and coral reefs,—the eucha  
isles where fountains play and sirens sing a  
mental gems lie gleaming on sun-steeped "sa  
of gold." He crossed the desert of theology,—t  
vast and verdureless expanse of desolation's wa  
without a palm—pressed onward and upward

tianity, the other religions of the world. He learned, that, barring the accident of birth,—the trappings of circumstance,—all men were essentially alike; that they had a common nature; that they were born of the insatiable desire for knowledge,—to account for his surroundings,—to understand the meaning of existence—born of the efforts of a few men to wrest from mother nature the secret of life and whither. He found that the story of the Bible is essentially the story of all; that the more stories he read, the more firmly convinced he became that all were essentially false.

Moreover, he found these stories woven into the warp and woof of human life. He found that the various religions, by fear, indirectly, by fear,—by threat of punishment in this and hereafter,—had destroyed the liberty of the human mind. He saw that these religions, by fear, had enslaved the brain, and that, exerting the same influence through the instrumentality of civilization, they had manacled the body. He saw that the source of all evil is the very fountain-head from which the life of man was man, has flowed the blood-dyed



*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

every spiritual but every temporal throne must crumble. But while Ingersoll recognized this, he also recognized, as already indicated, that, as a matter of history, religion had never sought to exist wholly apart from the state, but that, on the contrary, the two had vied with each other in the work of oppression; and so he said:—

“The church and the state—two vultures—have fed upon the liberties of man.”

And it was with all these facts vividly before his mind; with the thought of man's slow and painful journey toward the light; with memories of the Middle Ages, of the Crusades, of the Inquisition, of the horrid night, of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, of the murder of the Huguenots, of the expulsion of the Jews and the Moors from Spain; it was with wearied eyes upon the flames that clothed the fadeless raiment the forms of Servetus and Bruno; it was while groping his way, with the noblest of our race, through the dark and earless gloom of the Inquisition,—over the blood-stained stones that he wrote this incomparable passage:—

freedom to the sons of men. *And then I vowed that they had held, and hold it high, that light of manhood still.*" (iv 66)<sup>1</sup>

Whoever would form a just estimate of Ingersoll's work and worth,—whoever would make the final declaration as to whether Ingersoll was a reformer or an iconoclast,—must bear in mind these grateful words, this lofty resolution. To understand Ingersoll's ideals, and the conflicts he encountered. He must consider the conditions which Ingersoll sought to break, and his attitude for seeking to break them,—whether he was a man of mere destruction, or to clear the way for those to come might 'build more substantial'.

Studying the factors that influenced the career of Ingersoll, we naturally find a part of his century's theological and social changes. The great religious revival of 1857 arrested the progress of the Unitarian movement. The deprivations and sufferings in the early years, serious business reverses, during the late '40s and '50s, that year, resulted, as such conditions usually result, in a profound and far-reaching spiritual awakening. Localities the most conservative in business and financial affairs, and

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

pages, the news of revivals. The interest was tense; and what was true of New York was true of every village and hamlet in the land. That unusual and widespread zeal was dependent upon the prevailing "hard times" seems indubitably proven, particularly in view of the fact that very few itinerant evangelists were abroad in the land. The whole country was orthodox to the core, a juxtaposition which, if it did not inspire, and justify, this epigram of Ingersoll: "He who dries a crust wet with his own tears worships."

The succeeding years of civil war, although they necessarily inhibited the growth and prosperity of the churches, do not appear permanently to have weakened the hold that superstition had secured upon the masses. The appalling spectacle of every sect of the Southern church declaring, as a duty, for the "divine" institution of human slavery, and supporting by passages of Scripture the most arrogant declarations, did not prompt any considerable number of even the friends of liberty in the North to take a look under their own pulpits. Neither the Northern nor the Southern Christ

that, although the South still adhered to the justice of her God and of her cause, she explained why her prayers were unanswered. However, the North triumphed: physical slavery perished: intellectual slavery remained. The South country was still orthodox. The section which had been so widely sown with the seed of want, during 1857, and subsequent years, for the most part, had lain fallow through years of strife, now burst into the bud of religious enthusiasm. Revivals were more frequent than in ante-bellum days. In the North, in some inconceivable way, the sword of victory had been wielded by Providence, while those of the South still to reason, humbly submitted to the visible ways of the same Power. In the agricultural resumption, particularly in the West, gave bountifully to the reconstruction and complex religious mechanism; and the South was soon again arrogant, powerful, and

During the great struggle, the Catholicism was not mitigated; and in 1864, the pope, in his famous encyclical

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

determined to break the back of the theological camel, he proclaimed, six years later, infallibility for Pius IX and his predecessors.

When, therefore, Ingersoll reached the stage of physical and intellectual maturity and took a view of his surroundings, what did he behold? His country, the Great Republic that he loved, in theological bondage. He beheld a people that had been grand enough to strike the physical manacles from four million human beings, themselves lying prostrate in mental manacles. He beheld the withering blight and sear of orthodox superstition with only here and there a spot of verdant sod; and he knew, that, if the church could have its way, even those few spots would soon be withered and charred. He knew that thousands of homes were simply penitentiaries for wives and children; that the public school was still an instrumentality for disseminating the doctrines of a particular religion at general expense; that there was scarcely a educational institution where thought was free; that the statute-books of many states were disgraced by cruel, ignorant, and barbaric laws, passed by

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX*

lectually honest and fearless,—denounced, ostracized, and even imprisoned, by the ignorant,—the respectable inanity of the times. He heard the memories of the nobles and moral heroes of the race,—slandered and maligned by orthodox malice. He saw the infamy of corporal punishment was sanctioned by the state, and in the school and the prison, the gallows and the whipping-post, the ghastly shadows—hideous shades from the darkest savagery—in a land where should have been the glad sunlight of intelligence; that in the streets citizens were mobbed, tortured, and killed, despite the Constitution which they were sworn to preserve; that politics and the press were the kind of shuddering fear under the pulpit; and that art, literature, and science, herself, were tainted with the touch of the evil.

These, in brief, are the conditions of the world Ingersoll beheld when, at maturity, he criticized his surroundings; and these conditions were those that, appealing to his intense love of justice and humanity—his profound and overn-

DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP

His earliest lecture, *Progress*, first delivered when he was only twenty-seven years of age, furnished abundant proof of this ; but it is in the commencement of *Some Mistakes of Moses*,—that chart compass for the unwary through the mist-banks of Jewish tradition,—that we find the concise statement of his purpose. He says:—

"I want to do what little I can to make my country truly free, to broaden the intellectual horizon of our people, to destroy the prejudices born of ignorance and fear, to do away with the blind worship of an ignoble past, with the idea that all the great and good are dead, that the living are totally depraved, that all pleasures are sins, that tears and groans are alone pleasing to God, that thought is dangerous, that intellectual courage is a crime, that cowardice is a virtue, that a certain belief is necessary to secure salvation, that to carry a cross in this world will give us a palm in the next, and that we must have some priest to be the pilot of our souls." (ii 13)

Fifteen years later, answering the query put by a member of the British press as to how he came to assume the aggressive with reference to Christianity, he stated:—

"We call this America of ours free, and yet I found it was very far from free. Our writers and our speakers declared that here the America church and state were divorced. I found this to be u

course did he pursue? Vividly conditions that I have indicated; thor with superstition's motley brood, a the freedom of mankind therefrom, did he adopt? Was he a destroyer? Unhesitatingly I answer: He was sively: he was both—the very cir made him the truest and greatest day. If at times he was more d constructive, more of an iconoclast th it was because, in the necessity of t not be otherwise. He knew that th to reform is dissatisfaction. He k is the womb of investigation, and tion is the Hermes, the winged me goddess of freedom. He was acquaint—understood her requirements and knew better than to sow grain in undertake the erection of a palace mire. He knew that every sunlit starred verdure clad was once a tang that where the marble arteries of now pulse and throb was once the un



*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

erty there ever rises a temple whose dome coronates the stars, it will rest upon the hard-pan of reason, not upon the muck of some decadent faith. He knew that if this earth ever becomes a throne whereon sits justice with the balanced scales,—if ever realizes the cherished dream of "the greatest happiness for the greatest number,"—it will blot out the lifeless ashes of the monster superstition and give them to the winds. And so he sought, with all his strength, the death of that monster, not failing, however, to plant, wherever he could, the blessed seeds which shall some day fill the land with fruitage and fragrance.

It has often been asserted, that his method of attacking what is called religion cannot be justified; that however profoundly convinced of its falsity he may have been, his course was altogether unwarranted. It has been claimed (to quote Gladstone as typical of the critics), that many of the subjects with which Ingersoll dealt "can only be approached in a deep reverential calm," and that therefore, his witticisms and jokes, his sarcasm and satire, his irony and ridicule, were inconsiderate

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL API

"But in what way can the absurdity of the answered, except by banter, by railleury, by ridicule, I are you going to convince a man who believes that the sacred wafer he has eaten the entire Trinity drinking a drop of wine has devoured the Infinite reason with a man who believes that if any of the left over they should be put in a secure place, so th eat God ?

"What effect will logic have upon a religious ge believes that a God of infinite compassion sent thirty or forty children in pieces for laughing at a bal

"How are such people to be answered? How c to a sense of their absurdity? They must feel arrows of ridicule." (iii 206)

Now, what in the Christian syste asked, did Ingersoll ridicule? What he failed to approach "in a deep rever Can it be shown that he ridiculed a conduces to the real and permane mankind?

Did he ridicule the Ten Command are two sets; and of them, he kept others to keep, all that are of the sli

Did he ever make of Christ a s cule?—

"And let me say here, once for all, that for th

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

" \* \* \* Back of the theological shreds, rags, and patches, hiding the real Christ, I see a genuine man." (i 456)

Did he ridicule the mother of the great Nazarene?—did he despise maternity?—

"The holiest word is mother."

In what way did he ridicule the Sermon on the Mount? By accepting, with sincere gratitude, of it that is good, all that is of value to mankind.

To what words of derision did he expose the Golden Rule? To these:—

"Give to every other human being every right that you claim for yourself."

What, then, did Ingersoll ridicule? He ridiculed the ridiculous.

It is here necessary to take a broad and accurate view of our reformer,—the full measure of a man. Robert G. Ingersoll, at the noon of life, the physical, mental, and moral ideal—the embodiment of the highest possibilities of his race. This I do not mean that he was wholly a god, a manlike god, nor even a godlike man—he was

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL A*

of optimism and cheerfulness, which spontaneous overflow in every chasion, his name, to all who really k reassurance, his handclasp an exalt sunshine, his voice a caress, his pres tion. However small, however la that he might chance to enter, he v nature's decree, the farthest from t ence: he filled and held the center. trusted humanity with the childlike true greatness. He never lost his fa ever hopeful, proclaiming in life's stor the bow upon the clouds, the harbing

And even this characterization, a may seem, entirely ignores one of the manifestations of his nature. Ind beauty was a characteristic that at guished him from the rest of the wor formers. A delicate sense of the c unusual impressionableness to beauty, his very being and shed its refinin throughout his life. In the work of former,—religious, political, or social,— the love of universal liberty—





*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

esthetic sense. In the work of Ingersoll, quite the contrary, we behold the lover and creator of beauty, as well as the lover of humanity—the all-rounded, ideal man. Other reformers, for the most part, appeal to the head alone. Ingersoll appealed to the head and the heart together, and not only to them, but to the deepest, the highest, the finest esthetic sensibilities, elevating and ennobling by indirection while he enlightened and convinced. Most reformers, at best, are only oak sufficient, perhaps, in height and arboreal amplitude, but with trunks here and there exposed from the asymmetry of deficient or too well-gnarled limbs. But Ingersoll was an oak that rose sturdy and stately, symmetrical and grand, beneath the sun and blue,—an oak round which the vine of beauty twined fragrant with the flowers of love and powers that seemed ever wet with dew.

Let us now turn to the alleged result of Ingersoll's iconoclasm. Let us consider the sweeping assertion, that he 'took away everything and gave nothing in return.' According to his critics, the effect of his work was to destroy the loftiest ideas

rationalist, sinking, as he wallowed, in the less mire of infidelity.

Now, we willingly admit, that, to call a twinkling an orthodox or even a nominalist to a person with no ideals or hopes, would constitute a phenomenon to be deplored. Such a phenomenon,—such a transition,—It must be remembered, that the mind Ingersoll says, is many-sided. It subsists neither upon affirmations nor wholly upon negations. It is neither wholly positive nor wholly negative. Quite differently, in connection with education that can concern it, there is, between two antithetic extremes, a series of almost imperceptible gradations. Between affirmation and negation stretches, without a missing rung, the practical ladder. Conviction does not pass up this ladder by leaps and bounds: it goes from rung to rung. It may go quite rapidly for a run in either direction, and it may fancy to have traveled the entire length without touching the ground, whereas, in reality, it has rested, if for an inappreciable time, on each.



*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

which it produces a superabundance for those of which it produces few or none, and vice versa, mutual satisfaction results. So it is, in effect, in the realm of reason. In every mind, there is what we will call the ideal; and this ideal must be satisfied, and always is satisfied,—always sees to it that there is compensation, reciprocity. Nothing is 'taken away' without giving something "in return"—nothing 'torn down' without "building something "up."

The truth is, that, however well it may be established by usage, the term "iconoclast," exclusively applied to men of Ingersoll's class, is an utter misnomer. Candidly speaking, reform without iconoclasm is impossible. The greatest reformers have been the greatest iconoclasts. An individual's iconoclasm is directly proportional to his knowledge. The more he knows, the more he differs from his fellows, and consequently the more he disagrees with them; that is to say, the more "images" he is obliged to break, if he is mentally honest, and makes known to them his ideas and ideals of reform. "Iconoclast" is one of the mis-

the shattered remnants, cry "Iconoclasm!" and endeavor to bludgeon him into subject.

The greatest reformers, I repeat, have been the greatest iconoclasts. The scriptural law never existed, was an iconoclast: he sought to overthrow Judaism. Columbus and Magellan were iconoclasts: they upset the mental images of the patristic geographers. Copernicus was an iconoclast: he violated the unshakable Greek drama; but he was "the most original of the human race." Thomas Paine was an iconoclast: he shattered the tyrannical idol of "right," and sowed the seeds of the Declaration of Independence. Darwin was an iconoclast of the very greatest: he broke the inviolable laws of logical science, though they were worn by the most eminent scientists of his day. Beethoven was an iconoclast: he disregarded the rules of musical composition, and—wrote the sublimest music of the age. Whitman was another iconoclast—Walter Whitman, the uncouth Samson who pulled down the temple of prosody, scorned the pris-

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

And while he might have answered, with justification, in the language of Voltaire—"What? have delivered you from the jaws of a wild beast that was devouring you, and you ask me what will give you in its place!"—these terse, laconic words by no means served as his reply.

What did so serve? What did Ingersoll say to the charge that he was a 'mere iconoclast'?—that his teachings were 'negative,' 'destructive'?—that 'he tore down without building up'?—that 'he took away everything and gave nothing in return'? Or, more pointedly, what *did* he give in return' for what, as his critics correctly stated, 'he took away'? Well, to begin with, he gave this:—

"To love justice, to long for the right, to love mercy, to pity the suffering, to assist the weak, to forget wrongs and remember benefits—to love the truth, to be sincere, to utter honest words, to love liberty—to wage relentless war against slavery in all its forms, to love wife and child and friend, to make a happy home, to love the beautiful in art, in nature, to cultivate the mind, to be familiar with the mighty thoughts that genius has expressed, the noble deeds of all the world—to cultivate courage and cheerfulness, to make others happy, to fill life with the splendor of generous acts, the warmth of loving words,

and what he elsewhere so variously and tently proclaims as "*the gospel of this*" "*the religion of good health*," "*the religion of good health and joy*." He gave "*the gospel of the fireside*," "*the religion of good living*," "*the religion of good fellowship*." He gave "*the religion of intelligence*," "*the religion of usefulness*," "*the religion of humanity*."<sup>1</sup>

And all this, they tell us, is the work of an 'iconoclast'! Think of it!—of the intellectual monstrosity thus brought before our eyes.

Here is a man who spent his life for the defense and championship, the exaltation and glorification and immortalization—of truth, reason, justice, mercy, generosity, patriotism, virtue, marriage, maternity, genius; and he is termed 'a mere iconoclast'! Why? Is it because to defend, champion, glorify, and immortalize their opposite is the work of a 'builder'?

But let us go a little deeper. Let us and specifically examine Ingersoll in

DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?

Now, Ingersoll not only dealt with truth, he dealt there, in all his discourses, but, as indicated in Chapter IX, he devoted an entire lecture to *Truth*. What did he say?—

"Truth is the relation between things and thoughts, and between thoughts and thoughts. The perception of this relation bears the same relation to the logical faculty in man, that music does to some portion of the brain—that is to say, it is a mental melody. The sublime strain has been heard by a few, and I am enthusiastic enough to believe that it will be the music of the future." (xii 343)<sup>1</sup>

"Nothing is greater, nothing is of more importance, than to find amid the errors and darkness of this life, a shining truth.

"Truth is the intellectual wealth of the world.

"The noblest of occupations is to search for truth.

"Truth is the foundation, the superstructure, and the glittering dome of progress.

"Truth is the mother of joy. Truth civilizes, ennobles, and purifies. The grandest ambition that can enter the soul is to know the truth.

"Truth gives man the greatest power for good. Truth is sword and shield. It is the sacred light of the soul.

"The man who finds a truth lights a torch." (iv 72)

"Every man should be true to himself—true to the inward light." (iv 73) "He should preserve as his most precious jewel the purity of his soul." (iv 74) "Each man, in the laboratory of his own mind, and for himself alone, should test the so-called facts—theories of all the world. Truth, *in accordance with his reason*, should be his guide and master." (iv 73)

falsehood, "in accordance with his" should be "the true reformer's" master."

Ingersoll lectured for twenty years on *Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child*. What say?—

"By physical liberty I mean the right to do anything that does not interfere with the happiness of another. By intellectual liberty I mean the right to think right and the right to think wrong. By moral liberty I mean you do your best to think right." (i 353, vii 6)

"Liberty sustains the same relation to mind that health sustains to the body." (i 329)

"What light is to the eyes, what love is to the heart, what liberty is to the soul of man."

"Without liberty, the brain is a dungeon and the soul a prison."

"To preserve liberty is the only use for government. Liberty is not an excuse for legislatures, or presidents, or courts, or decisions. Liberty is not simply a means—it is an end. Liberty is our history, our literature, our laws, our hearts—that which makes us what we are. We are nought but moulded clay. Liberty is the one price of life. Liberty includes and holds and is the weal and wealth of life. Liberty is the soil and light and rain—it is the plant and bud and flower. Liberty and in that sacred word lie all the seeds of progress." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 201.)

"Liberty, a word without which all other words are meaningless."

Do these definitions, conclusions, and

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

alm, will shake from the golden scales in which are weighed the acts of men, the very dust of prejudice and caste : No race, no color, no previous condition, can change the rights of men." (ix 91)

"\* \* \* when the sword of justice becomes a staff to support the weak, it bursts into blossom. \* \* \* " (iii 412)

"Justice is the only worship."

Need I ask whether these are the words of 'a mere iconoclast'? If they are, then human speech has lost all meaning, and become "the babbling gossip of the air."

Nor are we, by any means, forced to conclude our examination here : we might continue almost indefinitely, receiving like answers on each and every one of the great fundamentals. And even when we should have covered only one side ; for the following questions would remain : Did Ingersoll ever oppose, for a single instant, any of the things of which he thus far appears to have been the steadfast defender and champion? Did he ever utter or write one word against love, liberty, truth, reason, justice, mercy, generosity, honesty, patriotism, virtue, marriage, maternity, beauty, and genius? Is there extant a speech, address, essay, lecture, oration, or poem of his which fails to favor

"A compromise is a bargain in which each party does for himself and himself." (ix 443)

Far from 'a mere iconoclast,' or 'the great destroyer,' it would be more nearly just to call him 'the great builder.' For, despite the iconoclasm with which he is so rightly, so nobly, so bravely charged, there is in his teachings more of the constructive, the truly progressive, the more than in those of any of the many others who have addressed themselves to the heart of the English-speaking world. I need to take my word for this: read his and theirs.

But as this invitation imposes a task so massive to be in furtherance of our immediate needs, I shall here lay before the reader some of Ingersoll's reformatory teachings. Deferring consideration in the two succeeding chapters to the charge that the tendency of his work was to undermine the foundations of law and morality and of immortality, and deferring also, for still later chapters, his constructive (and practical exemplifications) in domestic life, I shall now turn to his teachings on the subject of the future life.



DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?

words, his understanding of what is "positive" and what "negative" in reformatory values:—

"There is an idea that Christianity is positive, and Infidelity negative. If this be so, then falsehood is positive and truth is negative. What I contend is that Infidelity is a positive religion; that Christianity is a negative religion. Christianity denies and Infidelity admits. Infidelity stands by facts; it demonstrates by the conclusions of the human reason. Infidelity does all it can to develop the brain and the heart of man. That is positive. Religion asks man to give up this world for one he knows nothing about. That is negative. I stand by the religion of reason. I stand by the dogmas of demonstration (i 495)<sup>1</sup>

again, more comprehensively:—

"The object of the Freethinker is to ascertain the truth—the conditions of well-being—to the end that this life will be made of value. This is the affirmative, positive, and constructive side.

"Without liberty there is no such thing as real happiness. \* \* \*  
"All religious systems enslave the mind. Certain things are demanded—certain things must be believed—certain things must be done—and the man who becomes the subject or servant of this superstition must give up all idea of individuality or hope of intellectual growth and progress.

"The religionist informs us that there is somewhere in the universe a orthodox God, who is endeavoring to govern the world, and who for this purpose resorts to famine and flood, to earthquake and pestilence \* \* \* . That is called affirmative and positive.

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

"It will thus be seen that there is an affirmative constructive side to Freethought.

"What is the positive side?"

"First: A denial of all orthodox falsehoods—superstitions. \* \* \* Then comes another phase of work. The Freethinker knows that the universe is not a miracle. There is no room, even in infinite space, for the miraculous. \* \* \* He feels that all in the universe are made for happiness, and that only those are happy who live in the conditions of happiness. \* \* \*

"The positive side is this: That every good act has good sequences—that it bears good fruit forever—and that every evil has evil consequences, and bears bad fruit. The Freethinker asserts that every man must bear the consequences of his acts—that he must reap what he sows, and that he cannot be saved by the goodness of another, or damned for the wickedness of another.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The positive side of Freethought is to find the facts of nature—to the end that we may take advantage of those facts—for the purpose of feeding and clothing mankind.

"In the first place, we wish to find that which will prevent or kill disease—that which will preserve or give us health—that which will prevent or cure pain—that which will preserve or give us health.

"We also want to go in partnership with these facts—to the end that we may be well fed and clothed—that we may have houses that protect us from heat and cold. And beyond these simple necessities—there are still wants and desires. Freethought will give us the highest possible in art—beauty and thrilling in music—the greatest paintings, the greatest sculpture—in other words, Freethought will develop

## DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?

"I understand that the word Secularism<sup>1</sup> embraces everything that has no real interest or value to the human race. I take it for granted that everybody will admit that well-being is the only good; that is, that it is impossible to conceive of anything of real value that does not tend either to preserve or to increase the happiness of some sentient being. Secularism, therefore, covers the entire territory. It is the circumference of human knowledge and of human effort. It is, you may say, *the religion of this world*;<sup>2</sup> but if there is another world, it is necessarily the religion of that, as well.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Secularism teaches us to be good here and now. I know nothing better than goodness. Secularism teaches us to be just here and now. It is impossible to be juster than just.

"Man can be as just in this world as in any other, and justice must be the same in all worlds. Secularism teaches a man to be generous and generosity is certainly as good here as it can be anywhere else. Secularism teaches a man to be charitable, and certainly charity is as beautiful in this world and in this short life as it could be were man immortal.

"But orthodox people insist that there is something higher than Secularism; but, as a matter of fact, the mind of man can conceive of nothing better, nothing higher, nothing more *spiritual*,<sup>3</sup> than goodness, justice, generosity, charity. Neither has the mind of man been capable of finding a nobler incentive to action than human love (iii 390)

And just here, it is important to know what, according to Ingersoll's understanding, to be *really spiritual*''<sup>4</sup>:—

fireside. He cultivates the amenities and refinement of the friend and champion of the oppressed. His sympathies are for the poor and the suffering. He attacks what he believes to be wrong, though defended by the many, and he is willing to stand against the world. He enjoys the beautiful. In the highest creations of Art his eyes are suffused with tears. He listens to the great melodies, the divine harmonies, and the raptures of death and love. He is interested in the burdens of the world. He carries in his heart the deeper meanings. He appreciates the harmonious melody of a perfect life.

"He loves his wife and children better than anything else. More for the world he lives in than for any other. He charges the duties of this life, to help those that he loves, to believe in being useful—in making money to feed the hungry, to educate the ones he loves—to assist the deserving and the poor. He does not wish to be a burden on others. He is kind and sincere.

\* \* \* \* \*

"The spiritually-minded man is a poet. If he does not create, he lives it. He is an artist. If he does not paint, he feels them, and their beauty softens the temple of his soul with all that is beautiful, and the shrine of the Ideal." (xi 484)

It will accordingly be seen, that the doctrines of which Ingersoll was the advocate, and which are so variously called "Infidelity," "Freethought," "Secularism," are not, in his opinion, 'merely neg-

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

morals, they 'merely negative' what is morally wrong, while affirming all that is morally right; and that, therefore, they are not only affirmatively positive, and constructive, but ethical, and even spiritual,—that they are, ever have been, and ever must be, the one coherent, unified, and truly reformative force. This will become more undeniably apparent as we proceed.

Thus, answering the great question, "How can we reform the world?" Ingersoll said:—

"Ignorance being darkness, what we need is intellectual light; the most important things to teach, as the basis of all progress, are that the universe is natural; that man must be the providence of man; that, by the development of the brain, we can avoid some of the dangers, some of the evils, overcome some of the obstructions, and make advantage of some of the facts and forces of nature; that, by invention and industry, we can supply, to a reasonable degree, the wants of the body, and by thought, study and effort, we can in part satisfy the hunger of the mind.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Being satisfied that the supernatural does not exist, man should turn his entire attention to the affairs of this world, to the facts of nature." (iv 123)

And one of the first things which Ingersoll would have man do, in so 'turning his attention' was

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

"No man has imagination enough to paint the horrors and cruelties of war. Think of sending shot through the bodies of men! Think of the wounds! Think of the maimed, the mutilated, the mangled

In the following, he manifests the power of the sight of the true reformer:—

"As long as nations meet on the fields of war, they sustain the relations of savages to each other—as the laurel and the oak on the brows of those who kill. Citizens resort to violence, and the quarrels of nations are settled by dagger and revolver." (xi 158)

Painfully conscious, therefore, of the waste,—this cruelty,—this perpetration of individual violence and crime,—he appeals to the brain and the heart of mankind in the following appeal:—

"Every good man, every good woman, should oppose war, to stop the appeal to savage force. Man is not made upon his strength, and decides for himself what is right and wrong. Civilized men do not settle their differences by force. They submit the quarrel to arbitrators and courts of law. They sustain the relations of savages to each other, by settling their disputes. Each nation decides for itself, and endeavors to carry its decision into effect.

## *DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

dollars. The interest on this vast sum has to be paid ; it has to be paid by labor, much of it by the poor, by those who are compelled to give up many themselves almost the necessities of life. This debt is growing year by year. There must come a change, or Christendom will become bankrupt.

"The interest on this debt amounts at least to nine hundred million dollars a year ; and the cost of supporting armies and navies, of repairing ships, of manufacturing new engines of death, probably amounting including the interest on the debt, to at least six million dollars a day. Following ten hours for a day, that is for a working-day, the waste of war is at least six hundred thousand dollars an hour, that is to say one thousand dollars a minute.

"Think of all this being paid for the purpose of killing and poisoning to kill our fellow-men. Think of the good that could be done with this vast sum of money ; the schools that could be built, the wants that could be supplied. Think of the homes it would build for the children it would clothe.

"If we wish to do away with war, we must provide for the settlement of national differences by an international court. This court should be in perpetual session ; its members should be selected by the various governments to be affected by its decisions, and, at the command and disposal of this court, the rest of Christendom being demilitarized, there should be a military force sufficient to carry its judgments into effect. There should be no other excuse, no other business for an army or a navy in the civilized world." (iv 124)

Another great waste of energy and wealth which Weyl and Weyl would have man avoid is indicated in the following :—

The vast river of glittering gold Niagara, ceaselessly pours into the abyss, should be diverted into channels of commerce, science, and utility.

From the enormous properties and of denominational Christendom,—the first, in our own country (in 1896), for one thousand million dollars," and interest, amounting to about two million a week, or five hundred dollars a minute every working-day of ten hours,—"Ingersoll points out, "are remarkable good accomplished does not appear. There is no great diminution in the decrease of immorality and poverty perceptible." (iv 128) He would then with the view of reducing this expenditure to a minimum, the principle of amalgamation and centralization. He says:—

"In many of our small towns—towns of three or four hundred people—will be found four or five churches, some of which are founded upon immaterial differences."

"Now, it seems to me that it would be far better to have one church in a town, having a population of four or five thousand."



## *DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

knitting and sewing; and connected with it should be rooms for playing of games, billiards, cards, and chess. Everything should be made as agreeable as possible. The citizens should take pride in the building. They should adorn its niches with statues and its walls with pictures. It should be the intellectual center. They could employ a gentleman of ability, possibly of genius, to address them on Sundays, on subjects that would be of real interest, of real importance. They could say to this minister:

“‘We are engaged in business during the week; while we are working at our trades and professions, we want you to study, and on Sunday tell us what you have found out.’”

“\* \* \* Let them have a Sunday-school in which the children shall be made acquainted with the facts of nature; with botany, zoology, something of geology and astronomy.

“Let them be made familiar with the greatest of poems, the finest paragraphs of literature, with stories of the heroic, the self-denying and generous.

“Now, it seems to me that such a congregation in a few years would become the most intelligent people in the United States.” (128)

Thus would he not only conserve the wealth and the energy of Christendom: he would divert them into channels of enlightenment and utility. He would employ them in seeking the aid of the natural,—in real education and real morality,—in obtaining happiness, well-being, here and now.

the holy hearth of home," he would find practicable means for the security of every practicable means "to keep the nation of tenants." "I want, if possible, "to get the people out of the tenement gutters of degradation, to homes where there is privacy, where these people can be in partnership with nature; that is, an interest in good government." (iv 138) and he continues:—

"I would exempt a homestead of a reasonable value of two or three thousand dollars," (iv 138) "from sale, but from every kind of taxation, State and local. These poor people would feel \* \* \* that something was absolutely theirs, and that no one could drive them from it so that mothers could feel secure. If the homestead exceeded the limit, then taxes could be paid on the excess. [This was one of Ingersoll's economic doctrines that the able should bear the expenses of government]; and, if sold, I would have the money realized exempt from taxation in order that the family should have the privilege of buying a new home." (xi 160)

Not only would he thus secure and improve the existing homes; he would endeavor to increase the number through the instrumentalities of the

## *DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

Each individual possessed the necessary means with which to purchase. In this connection, I would fix the amount of land that a single owner might hold in exemption from the right of the home-builder:—

“Let me suppose that the amount of land that may be held by a farmer for cultivation has been fixed at one hundred and sixty acres, and suppose that A has several thousand acres. B wishes to buy one hundred and sixty acres or less of this land, for the purpose of making himself a home. A refuses to sell. Now, I believe that the law should be so that B can invoke this right of eminent domain, and on his petition, have the case brought before a jury, or before commissioners, who shall hear the evidence and determine the value, and on the payment of the amount the land shall belong to B.

“I would extend the same law to lots and houses in cities and villages. \* \* \* ” (xi 160)

While, therefore, Ingersoll would take no property, even in the interest of the fireside, without just compensation, he felt it to be a principle of humanity, that no one should be allowed to hold more land than he could use.—

“We need not repeat the failures of the old world. To divide lands among successful generals, or among favorites of the crown, or to give vast estates for services rendered in war, is no worse than

that "every child should be sincerely  
He said:—

"Nature invites into this world every babe that is born. Would you think of me, for instance, to-night, if I had no children?—nobody had charged you anything, but you had to stand up when you got here you had found one man pretending to have a hundred seats, another fifty, and another seventy-five. If you were compelled to stand up—what would you have said? Invitation?" (iv 223)

And in so saying, he also applied, in a practical way, those distinctively Ingersollian principles of liberty and justice to which attention had been called.

Not less significant than what he said, preceded were his ideas of education:

"Real education is the hope of the future. The cultivation of the brain, the civilization of the heart, will drive war from the world. The schoolhouse is the real cathedral of the only possible savior of the human race. Education is the friend of honesty, of morality, of temperance."

Should we place in two groups Ingersoll's ideas of the school, the one group representing what he should, the other what should not be?—

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

school the spirit of absolute honesty and of perfect liberty. "Nothing should be taught in any school that the teacher does not know. Beliefs, superstitions, theories, should not be treated like demonstrated facts." (iv 150) Children should not be browbeaten by authority. They should be allowed to grow mentally, as well as physically. If they attempt to leave the intellectual cradle, they should not be beaten back with the bones of the head. "What I insist upon," he says, "is that children should not be poisoned—should not be taken advantage of—that they should be treated fairly, honestly—that they should be allowed to develop from the inside instead of being crammed from the outside—that they should be taught to reason, not to believe—to think, to investigate and to use their senses, their minds." (xi 533) They should be taught that nature is the only possible authority; that they should therefore put to her the question, and trust implicitly her answers. All should be taught that there is nothing too sacred to be investigated—too holy to be understood. Each mind has the right to lift a

cants, there were in the popular gospel many features far from his ideal. His shortcomings and deficiencies here had any necessary connection with the ideas were quite apart from those ideas and which he has just been shown to have objected.

Ingersoll insisted that every child be trained as ultimately to be capable of self-respect. This would, at the same time, make of self-respect. Our reformer had lived with the old idea (by no means yet of the educated should work only with. He could not countenance the false standard of those who, ashamed of hewing felling forests, ploughing fields, gathering—prefer “the garret and the precarious of an unappreciated poet, borrowing from their friends, and their ideas from (xi 161) To do away with such class make education real—the unified and training of all the faculties. He was now so often done, train the brain

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

welfare of the child was concerned, education was usefulness. One idea practically applied worth a thousand that merely made motions in the air. He deplored the fact, that, in lieu of a educational system conducted on these general lines,—founded on the basic idea of utility,—we have a system much of whose teaching “simply profits men successfully to fight the battle of life. Thousands,” he said, “are to-day studying things that will be of exceedingly little importance to them or to others.” (xi 161) He declared that many priceless years are wasted in filling the minds of students with the dates of great battles and the names of kings; in the acquisition of languages that long ago were dead; and in “the study of history which, for the most part, is a detailed account of things that never occurred.” And this, in his opinion, should be changed:—

“In all the schools children should be taught to work in wood and iron, to understand the construction and use of machinery, to become acquainted with the great forces that man is using to do his work. The present system of education teaches names, not things. It is as though we should spend years in learning the names of cards, without

*INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND*

withstanding Ingersoll's belief in "progress," he was far from deprecating the social value of education." For, as elsewhere stated in one of his most earnest contentions, that the student should be bounded by no artificial limit—by the student's own capacity for intellectual achievement or artistic production. Ingersoll would do, under present social conditions, would be to make "higher education" available to the capacity for self-support. Ingersoll taught every human being taught, "that man must learn to take care of himself"; that, just as man must shun death," just so should he "shun the burden on others." With Ingersoll the social question was, primarily, economic, and secondarily, esthetic. His quarrel with the world was wholly conditional. He had no objection to pupils' learning the odes of Pindar, but he thought the simple songs of industry were better; but he did think it better to be a student of the songs of industry joyously and well in a school, or even in a factory, than to be a student of Pindar in a penitentiary or the



*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

an orthodox clergyman, who, having come to look at things as though intuitively, with mingled pity and indignation, upon Ingersoll and his work, should suddenly meet with the following passage?—

“I sympathize with the wanderers ; with the vagrants out of employment ; even with the sad and weary men who are seeking labor but not work. When I see one of these men, poor and friendless, no matter how bad he is—I think that somebody loved him once ; that he was once held in the arms of a mother ; that he slept beneath the loving eyes, and wakened in the light of her smile. I see him in his cradle, listening to lullabies sung soft and low, and his little face dimpled as though touched by the rosy fingers of Joy. And then I think of the strange and winding paths, the weary roads he has traveled, from that mother’s arms to misery and want and all manner of crime.” (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 168)

The truth is,—however anomalous,—that Ingersoll was the one man of his day who consistently and insistently advocated in sociology in general and in criminology and penology in particular that which is highest, noblest, and tenderest in the teachings of Christ. While Christian governors, legislators, reformers, philanthropists, humanitarians, and theologians, shocked by what they termed “infidel blasphemies,” were advocating, as a remedy

would-be judges and executioners said to an audience :—

“ The next time you look with scorn upon a criminal, say to yourself, ‘ You are going to do one thing. Maybe you are not as bad as you look. Think of all the crimes you have wanted to commit; think of all the crimes you would have committed if you had the opportunity; think of all the temptations to which you have yielded; think of all the temptations to which you had nobody been looking; and then put your hand to your forehead and say whether you can justly look with contempt upon the criminal.’ ”  
(iv 231)

As Ingersoll himself remarked of his sympathy with the imprisoned and the outcast, “ even on the brow of crime he was glad to place the kiss of human sympathy.” Ingersoll was (and, too, by self-confession, a sentimentalist. But his sentiment was not mingled with the highest intelligence. Again, “ his brain took counsel of his heart;” more accurate to say, that his heart, and his brain, since, as a matter of fact, his sympathies, however ardent, were supported by the firmest of intellectual convictions. His sympathies, I repeat, are not maudlin. They are sure, a sympathy that is nothing more

DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?

a moral grandeur. Such was the sympathy  
Ingersoll.

His cardinal opinions and teachings concerning  
the criminal were based upon the belief that every  
individual, good or bad, invariably does precisely  
as he or she *must* do. He never wandered far in  
the maze of metaphysics in search of a foundation  
for that belief: rather did he seek and find such  
a foundation in physical science, particularly in  
physiological psychology. Without undertaking  
therefore, a lengthy journey in the realm of metaphysics,  
or even in that of psychology, but without hesitating  
to enter, if need be, the realms of both, let us endeavor  
to understand his position.

As elsewhere stated, Ingersoll accepted the great  
fundamental truths of physical science, drawing  
therefrom such inferences, and only such, as are  
warranted by reason and logic. He believed in the  
nature—that this universe of substance and energy  
is indestructible, uncreated, eternal—infinite in both  
time and space—this universe of which humanity  
is a part—is all there is. He believed that  
all is natural and necessary—necessarily natural

tient beings, is in the grasp of immortality, that every atom, itself a necessity, necessarily acts upon, and is constantly acted upon by, every other atom. It is believed that precisely the same is true of the aggregation of atoms—of every man—of the human brain. The fact that the brain is apparently distinguished from all other matter, by the possession of what is called consciousness, did not alter the case. The fact that the brain could cognize its being, and its own action, was of no moment. The cognizing faculty was not itself a potent phenomenon cognized: it was an independent witness on this side of the veil. It was not as the sunlight that makes the coal itself burning under the steam moving the pistons, nor even as the man in the cab, pulling the throttle: it was the man who stands beside the track and watches the train go by. A closer parallel: If the train is moving in the direction the man wills to go, and he observes and

DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP

any possibility, have desired or "willed" to move in another direction? Realizing the immutability of forces and conditions, Ingersoll believed that the man could not. He believed that to assert the contrary was to deny causation, the universality of force, the integrity of nature. He believed that the man could have desired or "willed" to move in another direction, he necessarily would have done so. "All that has been possible has happened; all that is possible is happening, and all that can be possible will happen." Therefore, man does what he *must* do, regardless of what (in the righteous or wrongful judgment of others) he *should* do. In other words, Ingersoll could readily conceive of an individual's doing as he *should* and *must*, or as he *should not*, but *must*; but by no possibility could he conceive of one's doing as he *should not* and *must not*. Hence, in his opinion, all alleged freedom of "willing," or volition, amount, on analysis, to no more than this: consciousness of agreement to action. The real cause of the "willing," or volition,—the *vis a tergo* of the action,—instead of being our servant, was our master; and "

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

"It is insisted that man is free, and is responsible right from wrong. But the compass does not determine right from wrong, neither does it in any way, of itself, determine the course to be taken. When winds and waves are too powerful for man, it is of no importance. The pilot may read it correctly, and know the direction the ship ought to take, but the compass is often wrong, men, blown by the tempests of passion, may have a conviction that they should go another way; but of what avail, if the force, is the conviction?" (*Prose-Poems and Selections*)

Asked for his opinion concerning the legal responsibility of the alcoholic,

"Personally, I regard the moral and legal responsibilities as being exactly the same. \* \* \*

"We are beginning to find that there is no effect without a cause, and that the conduct of individuals is not an exception. Every hope, every fear, every dream, every virtue, every crime, behind it an efficient cause. Men do neither more nor less by chance. \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

"\* \* \* Believing as I do that all persons act as they are, I make not the slightest difference whether the person is called inebriated, or sane, or insane—he acts as he is."

In reaching this necessitarian conclusion, Ingersoll, true to his philosophic nature, gave due consideration to all the facts, conditions affecting human conduct—

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP'?*

ray; and that either A or B, in a different environment, would necessarily act in still other way. Whether their acts might be good or bad, they would be as necessary as any other phenomena of nature—as absolutely necessary and inevitable as the reflection of light from an opaque body—the form of a snowflake—the motions of a planet.

In the production of that bountiful crop called crime, nature, in Ingersoll's opinion, ploughs the ground, sows the seeds, cultivates, waters, husband and harvests with as much skill as the most competent farmer in the production of wheat or corn. Indeed, it seemed almost as though nature sometimes resorts to irrigation and artificial rain in raising failures. And why did nature raise failures simply because, contrary to the wholly assumptive teachings of philosophers and theologians, nature was without design, object, or purpose—because she was deaf, dumb, and blind with reference to man. She produced a literal "Bluebeard" with the same satisfaction that she did a Florence Nightingale; that is, with none. In other words, the most evilish of men, like the most saintly of women,

with a skilful diagnosis: he turned to treatment, both preventive and curative.

Let us consider first the prevention which he proposed. After pointing out the well-known fact, that, for thousands of years, women had sought in various ways to relieve their kind; that they had "created good heavens and hells"; had "tortured and flayed alive and burned"; had preached and coaxed without result, he asked, "the reformers failed?" And he answered:

" \* \* \* I will tell them why.

"Ignorance, poverty and vice are populating the world is a nursery. People unable even to support their families, the huts and hovels with children. They rely on luck and charity. They are not intelligent enough to see the consequences or to feel responsibility. At the same time they want children, because a child is a curse, a curse to the parents. The babe is not welcome, because it is a burden. The children fill the jails and prisons, the asylums and the streets crowd the scaffolds. A few are rescued by chance, but the great majority are failures. They become vicious, live by fraud and violence, and bequeath their viciousness to their children." (iv 502)

He then continued:—



## *DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

"To accomplish this there is but one way. Science must make woman the owner, the mistress of herself. Science, the only possessor of mankind, must put it in the power of woman to decide for herself whether she will or will not become a mother.

"This is the solution of the whole question. This frees woman. The babes that are then born will be welcome. They will be clothed with glad hands to happy breasts. They will fill homes with love and joy." (iv 505)

Loath as most professional reformers would be to acknowledge the wisdom of advice so radical, it would seem to require much less of the power of the faculty than its giver displays in its expression. It pictures in one's mind the mental, moral, and political benefits which society would realize from its acceptance.

Several other definite reforms which were advocated by Ingersoll, and which would necessarily tend to the prevention of crime, should here be called or mentioned. They are: The abolition of war, both within and between nations, war being a perpetual excuse for mobs and individual violence; the enactment of legislation favorable to an increase of the number of home-builders and home-owners, thereby decreasing the number of tenants;

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL AP

statutes and laws which, in many  
or withhold the natural right to divorce

Passing now from Ingersoll's suggestions for preventing the production of crime, we will glance at his suggestions for the treatment of criminals already existing.

In his opinion, society possessed was morally charged with one duty, to this class : It was society's unde protect itself ; it was its unmistakal form the criminal if possible. As this right and the performance of t proceed conjointly, must alike inv cases, the restriction of the liberties doer, it will be understood that relates to the treatment of the conv tiaries and prisons.

First, as to confinement itself, I give to the convict every liberty consistent with achieving the purpose for which he is confined—the safety of society. And because society had no moral right to deprive an individual of more of his liberties than was absolutely necessary for the preservation

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

nothing that could not be put into effect at once if society but had the wisdom and the goodness to do so. As the only object of confinement, other than the protection of society, was the reformation of the convict, there should be absolutely no punishment. And why? Because experience had demonstrated that punishment was a failure, both as a deterrent and as a reforming force. No punishment that ingenious cruelty had ever devised was great enough,—terrible enough,—either to prevent crime or to reform the criminal. Therefore, its infliction,—the infliction of useless pain and suffering,—was itself a crime as great as many cases, as the crime of the convict himself. His may have been a crime of passion: this was a crime of deliberation, of calculating cruelty for cruelty's sake. Ingersoll believed that its effect was to harden and degrade not only the convict, but the person, the institution, the society that inflicted the punishment; that it was itself a potent influence for crime. Was it an example set by society and the state? If an individual should not follow them, whom or what

authority should not needlessly stalk of obedience. But of all of Ingersoll to punishment proper, the most this :—

“ \* \* \* I am opposed to any punishment inflicted by a gentleman \* \* \*.” (viii 378)

This is the final word. If the state all of its punishments should be inflicted by gentlemen, no punishment *per se* would be useless because no gentleman would know of useless suffering.

Every penitentiary and prison, in my opinion, should be a real reformatory, the noblest, the wisest, and the best charge. All officials and employes should be warden to the lowest in authority, selected with enthusiasm for humanity. Those men such as have shown as much genius as the criminal has shown for vice. Those of the precious few who, having stepped in the mirror of conscience, have had the impulse to “cast the first stone.” Those selected with as great care as are the

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

they could not refrain from so doing. The penitentiary should be a mental and moral almshouse—a laboratory in which humanitarians, with the zeal of discovery, would seek in every heart the seeds of good. From the moment of his entrance the convict should be made to realize, if possible, that the government was his friend; that its object, beyond the protection of society, was to make him a better man, mentally, morally, physically. Those in charge should address themselves to his brain and to his heart. Knowing that, in the pursuit of happiness, the common sense of humanity, every man takes what he thinks to be the easiest road, and that the convict simply made a mistake,—has taken the wrong road,—they should try to convince him of his mistake and to place him, with intelligence and sympathy, in the right road. He should be instructed in the science and art of conduct. He should be taught that only the self-supporting can be self-respecting, and that the self-respecting has taken at least the first step toward real happiness and well-being.

But if Ingersoll would teach convicts the n

labor. He therefore insisted that he should be credited with what he earned at the cost of his maintenance. "He should be degraded nor robbed. The state should be the highest and noblest example," said he. "I could not see the social or economic value of keeping, or of keeping in idleness, the convicts while their wives and children starved and hungered in tenement or poorhouse. I would send the earnings to the families. I would not give to convicts that had no families, he

"Would it not be far better \* \* \* to lay out from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year, put this money at interest, so that when the convict comes out after five years of imprisonment he will have several hundred dollars of his own—not merely money enough to pay his way out of the prison from which he was sent, but enough to make it possible for him to commence business on his own account, enough to prevent crime from the door of his heart?

"Suppose the convict comes out with five hundred dollars. It would be to most of that class a fortune. It would be like having a work, a fortress, behind which the man could fight. It would give him food and raiment, enable him to start a new life. State or country where he could redeem himself. Thousands of convicts would feel under immense obligation to the Government. They would think of the penitentiary as a place in which they were saved—in which they were

*DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

because of the state's withholding the just wages of those who labor for it:—

As "the men in the penitentiaries do not work for themselves," "they have no interest in their toil—no reason for doing the best they can— \* \* \* the \* \* \* product of their labor is poor. Their product comes in competition with the work of mechanics, laboring men, who have families to support, and the cry is that convict labor takes the bread from the mouths of virtuous people." (xi 155) "If the convict worked for himself, he would do the best he could. The wares produced in the penitentiaries would not cheapen the wares of other men." (xi 156)

Ingersoll knew that if these "other men" were in fact "honest men,"—if, with him, they believed in universal justice,—they could not possibly object to paying for his toil a man whom nature and the mother of us all, had made less honest and virtuous than themselves.

To capital punishment, Ingersoll offered precisely the same objections that he did to punishment of every other kind, and at least two more objections. Briefly, the first of these,—based upon a profound knowledge of human nature and the law, and upon long technical legal experience—was:—

The second objection was :—

“The death penalty, inflicted by the Government, is an excuse for mobs.

“The greatest danger in a Republic is a mob, and if you inflict the penalty of death, mobs will follow. The State does not consider life sacred, the mob, however, will strangle the suspected. The mob will say: ‘There is no trial in the trial; the State does the same—we know why should time be wasted in technicalities?’ You may not the mob do quickly that which the State does slowly.” (157)

It would seem that any doubt of the validity of this objection might be dispelled by the numerous dispatches which almost daily appear in the press.

And after advocating not only the abolition of capital punishment, but many other equally positive and practical measures, the consideration of which would carry us far beyond the limits of the present volume, Ingersoll said :—

“The reforms that I have mentioned cannot be accomplished in a day, possibly not for many centuries; and in the meantime, much crime, much poverty, much want, and corruption must be done now.

“Let each human being, within the limits of his power, be supporting; let every one take intelligent thought



## *DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING UP*

and let him bind up the wounds of his fellow-creatures, and at the same time put forth every effort to hasten the coming of a better day.

"This, in my judgment, is real religion. To do all the good you can is to be a saint in the highest and in the noblest sense. To do all the good you can; this is to be really and truly spiritual. To relieve suffering, to put the star of hope in the midnight of despair, this is true holiness. This is the religion of science." (iv 155)

It would be impossible to close this chapter with more fitting and illuminating words than the ones with which Ingersoll himself painted on a faded canvas the past, the present, and the future. In adapting those words to my purpose, I wish to invite attention to two facts which they indisputably prove: First, that even the orthodox Christian of to-day is an iconoclast; second, that it was absolutely necessary for Ingersoll to be a far more advanced one, if he would be a true reformer,—he would hasten the coming of that ideal state for which he so devotedly, so heroically labored, and which he so hopefully, so incomparably, so gloriously predicted:—

"I look. In gloomy caves I see the sacred serpents coiled, waiting for their sacrificial prey. I see their open jaws, their restless tongues

## INGERSOLL: A BIOGRAPHICAL AND

and doves. I see other temples and other priests which are sacrificed the liberties of man. I look of God, the huts of peasants; the robes of king men.

"I see a world at war—the lovers of God are see dungeons filled with the noblest and the best derers, outcasts—millions of martyrs, widows, the cunning instruments of torture, and hear ag sobs and moans of millions dead. I see the fagot's flame. I see a world beneath the feet of chains; every virtue a crime, every crime a vi head of honor wearing the brand of shame; stupidity sainted, hypocrisy crowned; and ben earth, religion's night without a star. This was

"I look again, and in the East of Hope, the fi the herald star gives promise of another dawn. ashes, blood, and tears, the countless heroes leap and avenge the past. I see a world at war, an chaos of the deadly strife thrones crumble, alta creeds change. The highest peaks are touched dawn has blossomed. It is Day.

"I look. I see discoverers sailing mysterious s cunningly enslave the blind forces of the worl teachers slowly take the place of priests. Thinkers give the world their wealth of brain with words of truth. This is.

"I look again. The popes and priests and l altars and the thrones have mingled with the d of land and cloud have perished from the eart are dead. A new religion sheds its glory on gospel of this world, the religion of the body.

## DID HE 'TEAR DOWN WITHOUT BUILDING

without disease of flesh or brain—shapely and fair, the harmony of form and function.

“ And as I look, Life lengthens, Joy deepens, Love intensifies,--Liberty at last is God, and Heaven is here. This shall be.”  
(*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 157)

## CHAPTER XI.

### *WAS HE 'A MERE ICONOCLAST?*

*(continued)*

Were His Teachings Inimical to Law?

ONE OF the most serious general charge of iconoclasm has been preferred by the critics of the implication that the adoption of his teachings would destroy the social fabric. All the laws which have been enacted in the countless laws which have been enacted for the government of modern society sprang from the Mosaic code, and the abolition of which would have consequently plunge civilization into anarchy.

Probably a majority of Ingersoll's opponents admit, whatever their opinion as to the depth of his biblical scholarship, that

## *WERE HIS TEACHINGS INIMICAL TO MORALITY*

ments are the foundation of all ideas of justice and of law. Eminent jurists have bowed to popular prejudice, and deformed their wise statements to the effect that the Mosaic laws are the fountain from which sprang all ideas of right and wrong. Nothing can be more stupidly false than such assertions. Thousands of years before Moses was born, the Egyptians had a code of laws. They had laws for blasphemy, murder, adultery, larceny, perjury, laws for the collection of debts, the enforcement of contracts, the ascertainment of damages, the redemption of property pawned, and upon nearly every subject of human interest. The Egyptian code was far better than the Mosaic.

"Laws spring from the instinct of self-preservation. In ancient times I objected to supporting idleness, and laws were made against idleness. Laws were made against murder, because a very large majority of the people have always objected to being murdered. All fundamental laws were born simply of the instinct of self-defense. Long before the Jewish savages assembled at the foot of Sinai, laws had been made and enforced, not only in Egypt and India, but by every tribe that ever existed." (ii 234)

It would be both interesting and instructive to dwell upon Ingersoll's views of the foundation of modern jurisprudence, but it is far more vital and interesting, considering the nature of the criticism here concerned, that we devote the space involved to the presentation of his opinions and teachings regarding the different subject,—a subject to which, however, jurisprudence itself is closely related.

those of his opponents, thus enabling us to ascertain the truth.

Now, broadly speaking, just as there are in all other branches of philosophy two directly opposed classes of thinkers,—on the one side, the monists, who believe that the universe is the natural, necessary, and eternal *all*, and, on the other side, the dualists, who believe that back of the universe is the supernatural,—so in ethics, or morals, there are two classes.

With the dualistic school of moralists, which includes the theological critics of Ingersoll, an act is right or wrong according as it does or does not harmonize with the alleged command of a supernatural being, which command either wells up as human consciousness, or is found inscribed in some so-called sacred book, or both. This means that an act is absolutely right or absolutely wrong, regardless of its consequences; in other words, that absolute right and absolute wrong exist in themselves, just as the noumenon,—“the thing in itself,”—of the dualistic metaphysician is supposed to exist back of phenomena. It establishes a fiat in morals. It places ethical acts upon precisely the same artificial basis as civic acts. To-day it is lawful to throw refuse on to the street. To-morrow the governor signs a bill, and lo! the throwing of refuse on to the street is “unlawful.” To-day, as far as we know, stealing is right. To-morrow we read in a book, “Thou shalt not steal,” and lo!

stealing is absolutely wrong. Of course, if, as the theological moralists undeniably imply, stealing and certain other acts were made wrong by the commandments of Jehovah, it follows, as a necessarily unavoidable corollary, that those acts were right before, and that they would still be right had the commandments of Jehovah not been given. And this is only one side of the proposition. The assertion that a Supreme Being could by command make wrong that which before was right, necessarily and unavoidably implies that he could make right that which before was wrong. Nor is this all that is implied by dualistic theological morals.

If by the will or command of the Supreme Being certain acts were made either absolutely right or absolutely wrong, the fact of relativity, which applies in every other branch of thought, must be utterly ignored in ethics. If, for example, stealing is absolutely wrong, it is as great a crime to steal a grain of millet from the wealthiest man in the world as to steal the last penny from a helpless and homeless invalid. Indeed, we might make even more striking comparisons, since we are by no means logically limited to the comparison of acts of like nature. It is, I say, as great a crime, according to the dualistic theological critics of Ingersoll's ethics, to covet your neighbor's ox as to murder the happiest and most useful member of society. These, I urge, are not exaggerations but perfectly logical deductions from the premises

of the dualistic theological moralist. And precisely the same reasoning is conversely applicable to such acts of virtue as were sanctioned or commanded by Jehovah.

It is hardly necessary to point out, that the system of ethics, or morals, the cardinal principles of which I have indicated in this brief exposition is, in the ultimate analysis, based solely and absolutely upon belief in a First Cause, or Creator, and that, so far as the Jewish and both the Catholic and the Protestant theologians are concerned, the base of the system in question is still further narrowed to belief in the Old and the New Testaments. After what has previously been written in this work, I shall not discuss the tenability of that belief, but shall proceed, at once, to contrast with the moral system ultimately resting upon it the ethical ideas of the Great Agnostic.

In the first place, to the dogmatic assertion of the dualistic theological moralist, that all rational beings derive their knowledge of right and wrong from a superior being, Ingersoll would propose the relentlessly logical query: How, then, can the most superior being, that is, the very Supreme Being himself, be moral?

If, as all theologians assert, the most superior ("most superior" itself implies relativity) being of whom we can conceive is absolutely good, it follows, as a necessarily unavoidable corollary, that the most inferior ("most inferior" also implies



relativity) being of whom we can conceive is absolutely bad. But the most inferior being of whom we can conceive is not absolutely bad. Therefore, the first side of our proposition falls. To state the problem in a different way, we cannot conceive of absolute goodness unless we can conceive of absolute badness. We cannot conceive of absolute badness. Therefore, we cannot admit the absolute in morals—nothing absolutely good, nothing absolutely bad; nothing absolutely moral, nothing absolutely immoral. Both are alike inconceivable. "The absolute," says Ingersoll, "is beyond the human mind."

If, then, man did not derive from a being superior to himself, that is, from a supernatural being, his present knowledge of right and wrong,—of morality,—and if absolute right and absolute wrong, absolute morality and absolute immorality, are alike inconceivable, whence, according to Ingersoll, did man derive the knowledge in question? and what is man's standard of conduct? We will allow Ingersoll himself to answer this question, in a few sentences carefully collated from here and there in his works:—

"Morality is based upon the experience of mankind." (viii 149)  
"Man is a sentient being—he suffers and enjoys." (xii 60) "Happiness is the true end and aim of life." (ii 431) "Happiness is the only good." "By happiness is meant not simply the joy of eating and drinking—the gratification of the appetite—but good, well-being, in the highest and noblest forms." (ii 431) "In order to be happy \* \* \* [man] must preserve the conditions of well-being—must

live in accordance with certain facts by which he is surrounded." (xii 60) "That which increases the sum of human happiness is moral; and that which diminishes the sum of human happiness is immoral." (xii 60) "All actions must be judged by their consequences, \* \* \* and all consequences are learned from experience. After we have had a certain amount of experience, we then reason from analogy. We apply our logic and say that a certain course will bring destruction, another course will bring happiness." (viii 149) "There is in the moral world, as in the physical, the absolute and perfect relation of cause and effect." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 210) "If consequences are good, so is the action. If actions had no consequences, they would be neither good nor bad." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 209) "So, the foundations of the moral and the immoral are in the nature of things—in the necessary relation between conduct and well-being, and an infinite God cannot change these foundations, and cannot increase or diminish the natural consequences of actions." (iii 428) "There is nothing inspired about morality—nothing supernatural." (viii 150) "The highest possible standard is human." (xii 61)

Ingersoll's insistence, with Mill, Spencer, and other philosophers, upon the soundness of utilitarian morals, as implied by the single phrase "the greatest happiness for the greatest number"—a phrase which made glorious the name of Jeremy Bentham—is perhaps best shown by the following paragraph:—

"Morality is capable of being demonstrated. You do not have to take the word of anybody; you can observe and examine for yourself. Larceny is the enemy of industry, and industry is good; therefore larceny is immoral. The family is the unit of good government; anything that tends to destroy the family is immoral. Honesty is the mother of confidence; it unites, combines and solidifies society. Dishonesty is disintegration; it destroys confidence; it brings social chaos; it is therefore immoral." (viii 150)

After this brief presentation, I cannot refrain

## *WERE HIS TEACHINGS INIMICAL TO MORALITY?*

from quoting Ingersoll's comparison of the practical workings of the two ethical theories here concerned:—

"Christianity teaches that all offenses can be forgiven. Every church unconsciously allows people to commit crimes on a credit. I do not mean by this that any church consciously advocates immorality. I most cheerfully admit that thousands and thousands of ministers are endeavoring to do good—that they are pure, self-denying men, trying to make this world better. But there is a frightful defect in their philosophy. They say to the bank cashier: You must not steal, you must not take a dollar—larceny is wrong, it is contrary to all law, human and divine—but if you do steal every cent in the bank, God will as gladly, quickly forgive you in Canada as he will in the United States. On the other hand, what is called infidelity says: There is no being in the universe who rewards, and there is no being who punishes—every act has its consequences. If the act is good, the consequences are good; if the act is bad, the consequences are bad; and these consequences must be borne by the actor. It says to every human being: You must reap what you sow. There is no reward, there is no punishment, but there are consequences, and these consequences are the invisible and implacable police of nature. They cannot be avoided. They cannot be bribed. No power can awe them, and there is not gold enough in the world to make them pause. Even a God cannot induce them to release for one instant their victim.

"This great truth is, in my judgment, the gospel of morality. If all men knew that they must inevitably bear the consequences of their own actions—if they absolutely knew that they could not injure another without injuring themselves, the world, in my judgment, would be far better than it is." (vii 294)

Finally, the combined ultimate conclusions of all moralists, from Confucius to the present, amount to no more than this single epigram of Ingersoll:—

"Morality is the best thing to do under the circumstances."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### WAS HE 'A MERE ICONOCLAST'?

*(concluded)*

Did He Endeavor To Destroy the Hope of Immortality?

**I**N DEALING with the specific charges of iconoclasm that have been so insistently pressed by the theological indicters of Ingersoll, there yet remain to be considered his views of at least one other subject,—the immortality of the soul. Holding as they do so prominent and so essential a place in his life-work,—running like threads of gold through the very warp and woof of his philosophy,—their presentation is not merely desirable: it constitutes a task which no conscientious reviewer could avoid.

It is asserted by Ingersoll's critics, that his monistic and agnostic teachings, in general, and his rejection of supernatural purpose and design and the bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ, in particular, utterly destroy the hope of immortality, leaving mankind without the shadow of a consolation that the unspeakable wrongs of this life will be righted in another.

## DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?

Now, clearly to understand Ingersoll's views concerning the immortality of the soul, that is, concerning the mind after the death of the body, it is first absolutely necessary to understand his views concerning the mind before the death of the body. What were they?

Reiterating so much only of his philosophy as is essential to a comprehensive presentation of the views in question, and avoiding the "double words" of the metaphysician and the psychologist, I may state that Ingersoll believed in what is called the natural; that the universe is the uncreated and indestructible, the infinite and eternal, *all*. Without pretending either to define or to distinguish them, he believed that this *all* consists of what are called substance and force. He did not believe that there is any power, force, or essence behind the universe, because, even to think of such power, force, or essence, he would have been necessitated to think of some form or phase of substance or force, that is, of some part or phase of the universe. In other words, he would have been necessitated to think of something as existing behind itself. This being impossible, the supernatural was excluded from his belief. Incapable of conceiving of anything but the natural, he believed that every phenomenon is a natural phenomenon. Though the original development of organic life from inorganic substance and force was to him an insoluble problem, he believed that, from the moner or some even more

simple protoplasmic mass, man, through countless ages, had evolved by a series of purely natural, interrelated chemical, physical, and psychological processes. He held that by no conceivable possibility could the human organism have become different from what it is. Confident that there was no more trustworthy informant concerning that organism, he accepted the conclusions of the representative biological and anthropological scientists of his day. He believed, for example, that, without what are termed the voluntary muscles, it would be absolutely impossible for an individual voluntarily to exert force; that, were it not for the heart and the rest of the circulatory mechanism, it would be impossible either to supply with food the several tissues of the body or to remove from them the various deleterious products of waste; that, in the absence of certain nerve-tissues, there would be no sensation. He was satisfied as to the inevitable and invariable functional integrity of these structures. He believed, that, between the highly specialized and widely differentiated tissues or organs just mentioned, there is no vicarious action; that voluntary motion is invariably effected through the muscles; circulation, through the heart; sensation, through the nerves. He was convinced that the quality and the degree of functional activity in the organs concerned depend absolutely and inevitably upon their own physiological condition, plus the conditions of their en-

vironment. In short, he believed that the organs of motion, circulation, and sensation naturally developed, under natural conditions, and are natural organs, acting in a natural way.

Did he believe to the contrary concerning any other organ—concerning the brain? In my judgment, there is no better way of initiating a reply to this question than by asking another—than by asking simply this: Could he?

To him, the brain was either natural or supernatural: it could not be both. It was either a purely natural organ, manifesting the purely natural phenomena called mind, or it was a purely supernatural organ, manifesting the purely supernatural phenomena called mind. Which of these would he declare it to be? Holding, as already indicated, that every other organ is purely natural, could he declare that the brain, chemically the most complex, and anatomically and physiologically the most wonderful, of all, is purely supernatural, manifesting purely supernatural phenomena?

He knew that the source and origin of thought had been removed by modern science from the maze of metaphysics to the domain of the physical, the natural. He knew, that, superseding the theories of such dualistic thinkers as Plato and Descartes, according to the last of whom the ego sat an inexorable autocrat on its throne in the pineal gland, we have a physicochemical mechanism within whose wondrous substance is an epitome of all the past

and a hint of all the future—an organ constantly reacting to external stimuli, like all other organs and subject to the same immutable forces or conditions—an organ whose function is the production and manifestation of thought. And he knew, that were there no such organ, there would be no thought—just as he knew, that, were there no muscles, heart, nor nerves, there would be no motion, circulation, nor sensation. He knew, that, if this were not the case,—if that marvelous organ called the brain were merely a sort of play-ground for some “absolute” immaterial essence,—mental vigor would not increase directly (*pari passu*) with physiological vigor, as revealed by the scalpel and the microscope, nor wane like a fading flower with the progress of disease. He saw, that, if the brain be not the real and only source of mental phenomena there is no reason why, when a part or all of its essential cells and fibers are destroyed by accident, experiment, disease, or age, the individual concerned should not continue to think with as much facility as he did before,—to think with some other organ,—with the spleen, for example.

Of course, Ingersoll was well aware that so-called scientists had produced many volumes to show, that, although a certain more or less definite connection between the mind and the brain must be admitted, there is no absolutely necessary and inevitable relation between the physicochemical constitution of that organ and either the quality or



## *DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?*

the quantity of the phenomena it manifests. He was perfectly familiar with such arguments, all of which amount to no more than this, namely, that the relation between brain and mind is, at best, only a parallel relation, that is, the relation between the natural and the supernatural! So the assertions of the dualist made upon him no impression, save that they were, for the most part, untrue:—

“Thought is a form of force. We walk with the same force with which we think. Man is an organism, that changes several forms of force into thought-force. Man is a machine into which we put what we call food, and produce what we call thought. Think of that wonderful chemistry by which bread was changed into the divine tragedy of Hamlet!” (i 47)

It must not be inferred, however, that Ingersoll regarded mind and consciousness as solved problems;—that he was chargeable with the crudity usually attributed to materialistic psychology. For he was not a pure materialist. Nor was he a pure “energist”: rather was he what I venture to term an agnostic monist. He said:—

“I believe there is such a thing as matter. I believe there is a something called force. The difference between force and matter I do not know. So there is a something called consciousness. Whether we call consciousness an entity or not makes no difference as to what it really is. There is something that hears, sees and feels, a something that takes cognizance of what happens in what we call the outward world. No matter whether we call this something matter or spirit, it is something that we do not know, to say the least of it, all about. We cannot understand what matter is. It defies us, and defies definitions. So, with what we call spirit, we are in utter igno-

rance of what it is. We have some little conception of what we mean by it, and of what others mean, but as to what it really is no one knows. It makes no difference whether we call ourselves Materialists or Spiritualists, we believe in all there is, no matter what you call it. If we call it all matter, then we believe that matter can think and hope and dream. If we call it all spirit, then we believe that spirit has force, that it offers a resistance; in other words, that it is, in one of its aspects, what we call matter. I cannot believe that everything can be accounted for by motion or by what we call force, because there is something that recognizes force. There is something that compares, that thinks, that remembers; there is something that suffers and enjoys; there is something that each one calls himself or herself, that is inexplicable to himself or herself, and it makes no difference whether we call this something mind or soul, effect or entity, it still eludes us, and all the words we have coined for the purpose of expressing our knowledge of this something, after all, express only our desire to know, and our efforts to ascertain." (viii 524)

Believing, then, that mind, in some unknown way, is, like physiological motion, circulation, and sensation, a function or manifestation of the organ with which it is related, could Ingersoll logically accept the popular view, that it shares at death a different fate than they? Since to reply in the negative would be entirely gratuitous, let us pass, at once, to the paramount question, Did he *deny* that it shares a different fate? And let us have the answer in the Great Agnostic's own words:—

"I have said a thousand times, and I say again, that we do not know, we cannot say, whether death is a wall or a door—the beginning, or end, of a day—the spreading of pinions to soar, or the folding forever of wings—the rise or the set of a sun, or an endless life, that brings rapture and love to every one." (vi 155)

In a letter to Mr. David S. Geer, president of

## DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?

the Oakland Literary Club, Chicago, the same conviction is reiterated, and its foundation concisely stated. Mr. Geer had addressed to Dr. E. B. Foote, Sr., of New York, a birthday greeting that contained, among other things, a positive assurance of immortality :—

" 117 EAST TWENTY-FIRST STREET,  
" GRAMERCY PARK, April 24, '99.

" MY DEAR MR. GEER :

" What you said to Dr. Foote is beautiful and for all I *know* it may be all true. Still, I have no evidence that human beings are immortal. Neither have I any evidence that 'there is any wise and beneficent power back of all creation.' In fact, I have no evidence of creation. I believe that all matter and all force have existed from, and will exist, to eternity. There is to me no evidence of the existence of any power superior to Nature. In my opinion the supernatural does not exist. Still, we can wish in spite of, or against, evidence, and we can hope without it.

" Yours always,  
" R. G. INGERSOLL."

And elsewhere :—

" \* \* \* it is no more wonderful that we should live again than that we do live. Sometimes I have thought it not quite so wonderful for the reason that we have a start. But upon that subject I have not the slightest information. Whether man lives again or not I cannot pretend to say.

\* \* \* \* \*

" My opinion of immortality is this :

" First.—I live, and that of itself is infinitely wonderful. Second.—There was a time when I was not, and after I was not, I was. Third.—Now that I am, I may be again ; and it is no more wonderful that I may be again, if I have been, than that I am, having once been nothing." (viii 54)

" It is natural to shun death, natural to desire eternal life. With all my heart I hope for everlasting life and joy \* \* \* ." (viii 563)

As indicated in the beginning of this chapter, it has often been asserted by his critics, that the destruction of the Bible and the Christian religion, through the universal acceptance of Ingersoll's teachings, would blot out of the human heart the hope of immortality. Passing over the fact that, as has just been shown, Ingersoll, far from denying the possibility of a future life, himself ardently hoped for it, it must be noted that the assertion in question (doubtless unwittingly, but nevertheless unavoidably) implies, that, had it not been for that book and that religion, there would now be no such hope. Ingersoll, as would be expected, clearly perceived this unfortunate corollary of his adversaries; and we accordingly find him dwelling with insistence upon the fact that the hope of immortality existed, not only thousands of years before Christ is supposed to have been born, but thousands of years before the time of Moses; that, for many thousands of years, the very cross itself has been a symbol of the life to come; that it has been found carved in stone above the graves of a people who lived and loved and hoped and dreamed beneath the same "sunny skies" long before either the Romans or the Etruscans—carved in the walls of the ruined temples of Central America—carved upon Babylonian cylinders. He further declares, with undoubted consternation to many, that, although the doctrine of a future life was taught in Egypt, India, and China thousands of years before

either Christ or Moses is supposed to have been born, and is still taught there, it is not taught in the Old Testament. He insists that, as a matter of fact, while the Old Testament tells us how man lost immortality through Jehovah's preventing Adam from eating of the tree of life, there came from the top of Sinai no hope of a hereafter; that no one in the Old Testament "stands by the dead and says, 'We shall meet again.'" And, finally, he declares that, notwithstanding the "one little passage in Job which commentators have endeavored to twist into a hope of immortality," the Old Testament does not contain, "from the first mistake in Genesis to the last curse in Malachi," a burial service, nor even a single word about another world. Indeed, he goes even further when he asserts, that, "if we take the Old Testament for authority, man is not immortal." (viii 55)

To present just here, in what might seem to be natural and logical sequence, Ingersoll's views as to whether the doctrine of immortality is taught in the New Testament, and if so, the kind of immortality there contemplated, would be premature, if not altogether irrelevant. The fact, as pointed out by him, that the hope of another life, although not recorded in the Old Testament, was held among many nations of antiquity, thousands of years before either Christ or Moses is supposed to have been born, and is now held in heathen and other non-Christian countries, is a sufficient refu-

tation of the assertion, that, since in the absence of the Bible and of Christianity there would have been, and would be, no such hope, universal unbelief in them as divine institutions, in accordance with his teachings, would destroy it. And this refutation is at the same time a demonstration,—a demonstration of the fact, that, contrary to the apparent understanding of his Christian critics, the hope of immortality is something with which neither the Bible nor Christianity necessarily has anything whatever to do. That hope is not dependent upon either. As a matter of fact, the relation is precisely the other way. Take from the New Testament and Christianity their teachings of immortality, and the Bible and Christianity would perish; but destroy every copy of the Bible, and erase from the tablet of memory the last trace of Christian thought, and the hope of immortality would still 'spring eternal in the human breast.' And what is true of the Bible and Christianity in this regard is true of every other so-called sacred book and supernatural religion.

The weakness—the falsity—of the criticisms of Ingersoll's views of immortality lies in their failure to distinguish between terms. His critics confound hope with belief, and regard belief as equivalent to realization, or as a force capable of bringing about realization. It is therefore natural that they should place the utmost importance in belief, which, by a strangely erroneous consistency, they consider to

## *DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?*

be a mere puppet of caprice,—a result of the so-called will. They seem to think that even feigned belief is better than none; and so, ignoring the natural operations of the mind, they say to the rationalist: “The doctrines of Ingersoll may be good enough to live by, but they are poor doctrines to die by. Whatever your doubts, if you desire immortality you would better believe and be ‘on the safe side.’” As though a chemist should say to a navigator who occupied an agnostic attitude toward the theories of chemistry: “If on your next voyage you wish the hydrogen and the oxygen which form the sea-water to remain united as such, not to spurn each other, and, returning to dissociate gases, allow your ship to fall to the ground, you would better believe in chemical affinity.”

To such reasoning,—to the sophistical theological assertion that belief can change the fact,—the Great Agnostic, never doubting the uniformity of nature, replied:—

“If we are immortal it is a fact in nature, and we are not indebted to priests for it, nor to bibles for it, and it cannot be destroyed by unbelief.” (i 523)

And again:—

“Is man immortal?”

“I do not know.”

“One thing I do know, and that is, that neither hope, nor fear, belief, nor denial, can change the fact. It is as it is, and it will be as it must be.” (iv 64)

A question of profound interest here presents itself. As indicated in the preceding pages, it was apparent to Ingersoll, although he was far from either affirming or denying, that mind, like every other organic function, ceases at the death of the organ in which it is manifest. He was not aware that any mind had survived the death of the brain. Of one fact he was aware, however—that in the idea of immortality there is something fundamentally human—that, in every age, it had been almost universal to mankind. How did he account for this? Did he conceive it to be a gift from the supernatural? I have shown that he held it to be impossible even to think of the supernatural. Did he believe that the idea was an *a priori* one, as Kant believed some ideas to be? To hold that an idea is *a priori* is merely one way of saying that it is supernatural. Besides, Ingersoll specifically declared that all of man's ideas are *a posteriori*; that they were born of experience here in this world. How, then, did he account for the idea of another life?

Like all other individuals of genius, Ingersoll possessed a profound knowledge of human nature. With him, despite his stern and sometimes implacable logic, two factors entered into all mental operations,—heart and brain. He declared that whoever came to a conclusion without consulting his heart would make a mistake. And it was because he followed his own advice—it was because



*DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?*

"his brain took counsel of his heart"—that his conclusions were almost never wrong. He knew that those who have suffered most have thought most; that those who have lain in the lowest dungeons of despair and gloom have soared to the loftiest, sunniest, most ecstatic heights. In endeavoring, therefore, to account for that loftiest of ideas, he consulted not only reason but feeling. Finding that the brain could give no satisfactory explanation, he looked in the heart; and he found that human affection, the foundation of nearly everything else of value, is no less the foundation here. He said:—

"The idea of immortality, that like a sea has ebbcd and flowed in the human heart, with its countless waves of hope and fear beating against the shores and rocks of time and fate, was not born of any book, nor of any creed, nor of any religion. It was born of human affection, and it will continue to ebb and flow beneath the mists and clouds of doubt and darkness as long as love kisses the lips of death. It is the rainbow—Hope, shining upon the tears of grief." (i 270)

Were it possible to doubt that this exquisite paragraph contains the very kernel of the Great Agnostic's convictions on the subject concerned; were it possible to doubt that it came ingenuously, spontaneously, from his heart and brain together,—not from his brain alone, as an artful attack upon theology,—our questionings would be instantly silenced by the last clause of the following passage, which was delivered many years later at the bier of a brother (as indicated in Chapter V),

and which, I may remark in passing, has been frequently misrepresented and misunderstood. I have italicized the particular clause:—

“Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. From the voiceless lips of the unreplying dead there comes no word; *but in the night of death hope sees a star and listening love can hear the rustle of a wing.*” (xii 390)

Thus did Ingersoll find in human love, wrung by vain and impotent anguish, the secret of man's dearest wish. Thus did he, in a moment of grief, with a phrase as subtly delicate as the first tints of a summer dawn,—as gentle as hope itself,—unconsciously silence the loud pretensions of theology. As Newton, savant of the physical realm, divined in the falling apple the secret of the universe, so Ingersoll, savant of the mental realm, saw in the falling tear the radiant image of that hope of hopes. “Love,” said he, taking even a deeper view, “Love is a flower that grows on the edge of the grave.” Well might he have added, “and the hope of immortality is its fragrance.”

But there is another side to this hope; and it was on that side that Ingersoll uttered the most Ingersollian of his anti-theological views. What is the side to which I refer?

Without entering into credal differences, it may be stated, as a general truth, that, according to the teachings of Christianity, those who believe and

## *DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?*

practise certain things will, either at death or subsequently, be awarded everlasting joy, and that those who do not so believe and practise will, at the same time, be consigned to everlasting misery.

A logical analysis of this doctrine, especially if we accept the other alleged fundamental truths of Christianity, reveals the following absolutely unavoidable implications: (1) That an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being created,—called into consciousness from the unconscious elements,—billions of human beings, knowing that they were destined to everlasting misery; (2) that individuals will be held everlastingly responsible for their beliefs; (3) that finite acts will be awarded infinite punishment; (4) that the time will come when an infinitely wise, just, and merciful God will cease to be even just,—will refuse to allow his children to repent and be righteous; and (5) that human beings will be infinitely happy in heaven, knowing that those who loved them, and whom they loved, on earth are in everlasting misery.

It was against this phase of Christian immortality, and against this phase alone, that Ingersoll, with every fiber of his being, with every unit of his moral and intellectual force, waged war. This doctrine of everlasting punishment for the many and everlasting bliss for the few was the real center round which his lifelong battle raged. It made him an implacable enemy of the Christian religion. It was the one dogma that stirred the

utmost depths of his being. Its bottomless pit became a receptacle for the gall and wormwood of his indignation. But for this dogma, many hundreds of pages of Ingersoll's discussions and controversies would never have been produced; a large part of the lectures which were delivered to hundreds of thousands, and which were read by hundreds of thousands more, would never have left his lips; and Voltaire would have remained the most aggressive and formidable enemy of Christianity whom the world had ever known.

If we reflect that hatred of the idea of everlasting pain is necessarily born of human sympathy and the sense of justice, and that these exist from birth, if at all, as a part of the individual's temperament (as does poetic feeling, for example, in the temperament of the poet), we may not be surprised to learn that Ingersoll's opposition to that idea began during boyhood; but we shall be at least interested in learning under precisely what circumstances it did begin—doubly interested, I trust, because we shall, at the same time, be afforded a glimpse of the evolution of a great mind:—

"I heard hundreds of \* \* \* evangelical sermons—heard hundreds of the most fearful and vivid descriptions of the tortures inflicted in hell, of the horrible state of the lost. I supposed that what I heard was true, and yet I did not believe it. I said: 'It is,' and then I thought: 'It cannot be.'

"These sermons made but faint impressions on my mind. I was not convinced.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?

"But I heard one sermon that touched my heart, that left its mark, like a scar, on my brain.<sup>1</sup>

"One Sunday I went with my brother to hear a Free Will Baptist preacher. He was a large man, dressed like a farmer, but he was an orator. He could paint a picture with words.

'He took for his text the parable of 'the rich man and Lazarus.' He described Dives, the rich man—his manner of life, the excesses in which he indulged, his extravagance, his riotous nights, his purple and fine linen, his feasts, his wines, and his beautiful women.

"Then he described Lazarus, his poverty, his rags and wretchedness, his poor body eaten by disease, the crusts and crumbs he devoured, the dogs that pitied him. He pictured his lonely life, his friendless death.

"Then, changing his tone of pity to one of triumph—leaping from tears to the heights of exultation—from defeat to victory—he described the glorious company of angels, who with white and outspread wings carried the soul of the despised pauper to Paradise—to the bosom of Abraham.

"Then, changing his voice to one of scorn and loathing, he told of the rich man's death. He was in his palace, on his costly couch, the air heavy with perfume, the room filled with servants and physicians. His gold was worthless then. He could not buy another breath. He died, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment.

"Then, assuming a dramatic attitude, putting his right hand to his ear, he whispered, 'Hark! I hear the rich man's voice. What does he say? Hark! "Father Abraham! Father Abraham! I pray thee send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my parched tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

"Oh, my hearers, he has been making that request for more than eighteen hundred years. And millions of ages hence that wail will cross the gulf that lies between the saved and lost and still will be heard the cry: "Father Abraham! Father Abraham! I pray thee send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my parched tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."

"For the first time I understood the dogma of eternal pain—appreciated 'the glad tidings of great joy.' For the first time my imagination grasped the height and depth of the Christian horror. Then I

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<sup>1</sup> He was then about seven or eight years old.

said: 'It is a lie, and I hate your religion. If it is true, I hate your God.'<sup>1</sup>

"From that day I have had no fear, no doubt. For me, on that day, the flames of hell were quenched. From that day I have passionately hated every orthodox creed. That Sermon did some good." (iv 15)<sup>2</sup>

Fortunate hour, indeed, when infinite injustice sows the seeds from which it is to reap annihilation! Wondrous circumstance, when blind ignorance and heartlessness so touch the brain and heart of a child as to bring forth a flood of light and tears to dissipate the gloom and quench the fires of hell!

Not to the day of his death did the impression which Robert Ingersoll received on that Sunday ever leave him. Instead, it grew deeper. It was a poisoned wound which, never healing, became more and more sensitive to the environment of its possessor. As proof of this, we find, that, while in his earliest lectures he freely expressed his hatred of the dogma of everlasting punishment, it was not

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<sup>1</sup>After reflecting upon this paragraph, we can better understand why Ingersoll, in his manhood, felt impelled to buckle on his intellectual armor in defense of the man who at the time of the sermon in question had written these words: "Any system of religion that shocks the mind of a child cannot be a true system." See *A Vindication of Thomas Paine* (v 447-524); *Thomas Paine*, a lecture (i 121-65); *Thomas Paine*, an article published in the *North American Review* for August, 1892 (xi 321-39); *Thomas Paine*, in *The Great Infidels*. (iii 384)

<sup>2</sup>A vivid reminder of an almost parallel circumstance in the life of Lincoln, who, on seeing, when a youth (1833), a young colored girl on the auction-block, in New Orleans, turned to his companions and said: "Boys, if I ever get a chance to hit slavery, by God, I'll hit it hard!"

until the high noon of his anti-theological career that he publicly vowed never to deliver a lecture without attacking it, and that it was not until the very ending of that career that he declared that as long as he had life, as long as he drew breath, he should hate with every drop of his blood, and would deny with all his strength, that "infinite lie." Pursuant to this determination, it is in his latest discourses that he dwells most insistently upon the dogma of eternal pain, obviously not because earlier in his career he had neglected to bestow upon it what the orthodox regarded as adequate attention, nor yet because he entertained the least fear of its gaining ground, but because it was his profound conviction, that, just as long as a thing so terrible found lodgment in a human brain, it was his duty to oppose it to the utmost extent of his power.

Those who cherish as sacred the memory of his friendship,—who have basked in the illimitable sunshine of his nature, and felt the genial warmth of his heart,—and even those who only know him through the cold medium of lead and ink, will be reluctant to believe that Robert Ingersoll was capable of hate. And, indeed, if we apply the latter word solely to the individual, we shall be obliged to yield to their reluctance. That he was capable of hating institutions and ideas, however, no one, we think, will deny; and if there was any idea that he did hate,—if, in the boundless realm of thought, there was any idea that had dropped the plummet

into the depths of his detestation,—it was the idea of everlasting punishment.

He declared it to be the one idea the infamy of which no mind could conceive, no language express. Refusing even to allow that it was an original conception of the human brain, he declared that it was born of infuriated revenge in the lowest of the animal world. It was a certificate that our remote progenitors were the vilest of beasts. Only from the leering eyes of enraged hyenas and jackals—from the glittering eyes and throbbing fangs of arboreal serpents awaiting in pendent coils their unsuspecting prey—could such a thought have sprung; and only through the slanting foreheads and the cacophonous jargon of unclean baboons could it have reached the age of man. The doctrine of everlasting punishment had blighted the flower of pity in countless hearts, and put out the light of reason in countless brains. It had mocked at hope, and, in the place of honest doubt, it had thrust upon mankind the loaded dice of predestination and free will. It had made of the grave a bottomless, shoreless sea of flame, and for cradles it had put rockers on coffins. It had shrieked in the ears of maternity: "Your child will be the fuel of eternal fire!" Over the sweet countenance of Mercy, it had spread the scowl of Typhon, and in her hand it had placed the cross-hilted sword of persecution. It had invented the *auto de fé*, the thumbscrew, and the rack. It had



built dungeons, forged chains, driven all the stakes—cut, carried, and lighted the fagots. It had robbed the peasant, robed the hypocrite, crowned and sceptered the tyrant, and stained the fair face of Europe with ashes, blood, and tears. It had driven Justice from her throne of “eternal calm,” and put behind the universe an infinite fiend.

The doctrine that an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient being called into consciousness from the unconscious elements billions of human beings, knowing that they were destined to everlasting misery, was to Ingersoll the infamy of infamies, the one “unpardonable sin” against mankind. To the assertion that God has the right to damn us, because he made us, Ingersoll replied: “That is just the reason that he has not a right to damn us.” (i 508) Above, below, nor beyond this reply, reason and justice cannot go. It would not do to say that God made man “a free moral agent,”—gave him a “free will.” An *all*-knowing God gave man a free will, *not* knowing how he would use it!

That phase of the doctrine which asserts that individuals will be held responsible for their beliefs—that one will be everlastingly punished for failing to believe a thing to be true, when his reason, having heard the testimony both for and against, tells him it is false, and that another will be rewarded with everlasting bliss for believing the same thing to be true, when his reason, having

likewise heard the testimony both for and against, tells him it *is true*—received, as we should expect, the full measure of Ingersoll's denunciation:—

"This frightful declaration, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned,' has filled the world with agony and crime." (i 479)

That he regarded it as scarcely more pernicious than absurd and unpsychological, however, is evident from the following:—

"The truth is, that no one can justly be held responsible for his thoughts. The brain thinks without asking our consent. We believe, or we disbelieve, without an effort of the will. Belief is a result. It is the effect of evidence upon the mind. The scales turn in spite of him who watches. There is no opportunity of being honest or dishonest in the formation of an opinion. The conclusion is entirely independent of desire. We must believe, or we must doubt, in spite of what we wish." (vi 147)

Still more objectionable was that feature of the "plan of salvation" which arbitrarily attaches infinite consequences to finite acts. Of course, no thinker of Ingersoll's subtlety and profundity could fail to recognize, that, in the ethical realm, as in the physical, all acts are related, if only remotely and vaguely. Nevertheless, the idea that any act of this brief life—this glint and shadow on the dial of eternity—could merit everlasting misery was to him "a proposition so monstrous" that he was "astonished that it ever found lodgment in the brain of man."

Equally "monstrous" was that feature of the

## *DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?*

"plan" which implies that the fate of the soul is everlastingly fixed at death. If, during this life, there is more rejoicing in heaven over one soul that repents, than over ninety and nine not gone astray, why, reasoned Ingersoll, should the chance of repentance be denied in the next? Why should infinite goodness there stand between the repentant soul and righteousness? How could infinite mercy have an end? Why should the love that counts every falling sparrow and numbers every hair turn to hate on the verge of the grave? Why should the smile of infinite beneficence wrinkle to a frown on the somber face of Death?—

"Strange! that a world cursed by God, filled with temptations and thick with fiends, should be the only place where hope exists, the only place where man can repent, the only place where reform is possible! Strange! that heaven, filled with angels and presided over by God, is the only place where reformation is utterly impossible! Yet these are the teachings of all the believers in the eternity of punishment."  
(iii 318)

And again:—

"All I insist is, if there is another life, the basest soul that finds its way to that dark or radiant shore will have the everlasting chance of doing right. Nothing but the most cruel ignorance, the most heartless superstition, the most ignorant theology, ever imagined that the few days of human life spent here, surrounded by mists and clouds of darkness, blown over life's sea by storms and tempests of passion, fixed for all eternity the condition of the human race. If this doctrine be true, this life is but a net, in which Jehovah catches souls for hell."  
(vi 100)

And even ignoring all of the points which we have

shown to have met with the Great Agnostic's opposition, there is one which would alone have made him an aggressive opponent of the Christian plan of salvation. It is the one which implies that human beings,—beings of perfect goodness,—will be perfectly happy in heaven, knowing that those who loved them, and whom they loved, on earth are in everlasting misery. For if, to him, there was anything intrinsic,—anything that should endure and bind after all else had evanesced,—it was the golden chord of human affection. "Heaven," he said, "is where those are we love, and those who love us. And I wish to go to no world unless I can be accompanied by those who love me here." (1510) He declared, that, although, according to one of the alleged fundamental truths of Christianity, eternal happiness was rendered possible by infinite love, there would, under the Christian doctrine of immortality, be no love in heaven. For, did not that doctrine compel the father to say: "I can be happy with my daughter in hell"? Did it not compel the son to say: "I can be happy in heaven when my mother,—the woman who would have died for me,—is in everlasting pain"? Did it not compel the believing mother to say: "I can be supremely happy knowing that my generous and brave but unbelieving boy is in hell"? To those who would evade this extremity by assuming that the elect would be oblivious of the fate of the lost, he replied: "Another

## *DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?*

life is nought, unless we know and love again the ones who love us here." (xii 400)

Thus did the Great Agnostic again take counsel of his heart. As he had already found in human affection the secret, the origin, of the hope of hopes, so now did he find the magic essence that keeps it bright and pure. Thus did he find that the fairest flower is soil and light and dew unto itself, and that by its own fragrance it stifles the very thorns that threaten its existence,—the vines that venomous clamber to destroy.—

"And suppose after all that death does end all. Next to eternal joy, next to being forever with those we love and those who have loved us, next to that, is to be wrapped in the dreamless drapery of eternal peace. Next to eternal life is eternal sleep. Upon the shadowy shore of death the sea of trouble casts no wave. Eyes that have been curtained by the everlasting dark, will never know again the burning touch of tears. Lips touched by eternal silence will never speak again the broken words of grief. Hearts of dust do not break. The dead do not weep. Within the tomb no veiled and weeping sorrow sits, and in the rayless gloom is crouched no shuddering fear.

"I had rather think of those I have loved, and lost, as having returned to earth, as having become a part of the elemental wealth of the world—I would rather think of them as unconscious dust, I would rather dream of them as gurgling in the streams, floating in the clouds, bursting in the foam of light upon the shores of worlds, I would rather think of them as the lost visions of a forgotten night, than to have even the faintest fear that their naked souls have been clutched by an orthodox god. I will leave my dead where nature leaves them. Whatever flower of hope springs up in my heart I will cherish, I will give it breath of sighs and rain of tears. But I can not believe that there is any being in this universe who has created a human soul for eternal pain. I would rather that every god would destroy himself; I would rather that we all should go to eternal chaos, to black and starless night, than that just one soul should suffer eternal agony.

"I have made up my mind that if there is a god, he will be merciful to the merciful.

"Upon that rock I stand.—

"That he will not torture the forgiving.—

"Upon that rock I stand.—

"That every man should be true to himself, and that there is no world, no star, in which honesty is a crime.

"Upon that rock I stand.

"The honest man, the good woman, the happy child, have nothing to fear, either in this world or in the world to come.

"Upon that rock I stand." (i 523)

That this was, indeed, the "rock" upon which he stood, and that it and such other of his conclusions as have been presented in this chapter were founded in the depths of moral and intellectual conviction, are made doubly evident by the private letter which I introduce with the following explanation.

In the summer of 1885, a lady of San Francisco lost, by sudden and unexpected death, her only child, a son. Her grief, in itself overwhelming, was greatly intensified by the terrors of the Calvinistic creed in which she had been reared, and according to which she well knew that there was, for her unconverted son, no hope. Such was her anguish that her reason, if not her life, was almost despaired of. Among those who vainly tried to console her was Mrs. Sarah B. Cooper, a lady very prominent in Bible-class and other church work. One would naturally suppose that Mrs. Cooper, under the circumstances, would have appealed to some member of the clergy; but instead, she turned

## *DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?*

straightway to Ingersoll, begging that he endeavor, by written word, to relieve the bereaved mother of her terrible apprehension. His letter was given to a reporter for publication, on condition that the name of the recipient be withheld:—

“MY DEAR MADAM:

“Mrs. Cooper has told me the sad story of your almost infinite sorrow. I am not foolish enough to suppose that I can say or do anything to lessen your great grief, your anguish for his loss; but may be I can say something to drive from your poor heart the fiend of fear—fear for him.

“If there is a God, let us believe that he is good; and if he is good, the good have nothing to fear. I have been told that your son was kind and generous; that he was filled with charity and sympathy. Now, we know that in this world like begets like, kindness produces kindness, and all good bears the fruit of joy. Belief is nothing—deeds are everything; and if your son was kind he will naturally find kindness wherever he may be. You would not inflict endless pain upon your worst enemy. Is God worse than you? You could not bear to see a viper suffer forever. Is it possible that God will doom a kind and generous boy to everlasting pain? Nothing can be more monstrously absurd and cruel.

“The truth is, that no human being knows anything of what is beyond the grave. If nothing is known, then it is not honest for anyone to pretend that he does know. If nothing is known, then we can hope only for the good. If there be a God your boy is no more in his power now than he was before his death—no more than you are at the present moment. Why should we fear God more after death than before? Does the feeling of God toward his children change the moment they die? While we are alive they say God loves us; when will he cease to love us? True love never changes. I beg of you to throw away all fear. Take counsel of your own heart. If God exists, your heart is the best revelation of him, and your heart could never send your boy to endless pain. After all, no one knows. The ministers know nothing. And all the churches in the world know no more on this subject than the ants on the ant-hills. Creeds are good for nothing except to break the hearts of the loving.

"Let us have courage. Under the seven-hued arch of hope let the dead sleep. I do not pretend to know, but I do know that others do not know. Listen to your heart, believe what it says, and wait with patience and without fear for what the future has for all. If we can get no comfort from what people know, let us avoid being driven to despair by what they do not know.

"I wish I could say something that would put a star in your night of grief—a little flower in your lonely path—and if an unbeliever has such a wish, surely an infinitely good being never made a soul to be the food of pain through countless years.

"Sincerely yours,

"R. G. INGERSOLL."

The reply:—

"DEAR COLONEL INGERSOLL:

"I found your letter inclosed with one from —— [Mrs. Cooper] at my door on the way to this hotel to see a friend. I broke the seal here, and through blinding tears—letting it fall from my hands between each sentence to sob my heart out—read it. The first peace I have known, real peace, since the terrible blow, has come to me now. While I will not doubt the existence of a God, I feel that I can rest my grief-stricken heart on his goodness and mercy; and you have helped me to do this. Why, you have helped me to believe in an all-merciful and loving Creator, who has gathered (I will try to believe) my poor little boy—my kind, large-hearted child—into his tender and sheltering arms. There is a genuine ring in your words that lifts me up.

"Your belief, so clear and logical, so filled with common-sense, corresponds, so far back as I can remember, with my own matter-of-fact ideas; and I was the child of good and praying parents; and my great wondering eyes, questioning silently when they talked to me,—my strange ways, while I tried to be good,—caused them often great anxiety and many a pang—God forgive me!

"I am writing, while people are talking about me, just a line to thank you from the bottom of my heart for the comfort you have given me to-day. You great, good man; I see the traces of your tears all over your letter, and I could clasp your hand and bless you for this comfort you have given my poor heart."



## DID HE DESTROY THE HOPE OF IMMORTALITY?

And so, at last, we find that Ingersoll did not seek to destroy the hope of another life, but that he merely sought "to prevent theologians from destroying this"; that he did not seek to disparage the idea of a heaven in which rewards should be based upon the principles of eternal justice, but that he did seek "to put out the ignorant and revengeful fires of hell." We find that he did not affirm, that he did not deny, but that, because he lived, the great bow of hope, springing from the depths of human affection, arches with brighter radiance the darkness of honest doubt.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The two preceding letters, and, in part, the substance of the narrative introducing them, are from *Col. Robert G. Ingersoll As He Is*, by E. M. Macdonald.

The Mrs. Cooper mentioned in the text and letters was president of the Golden Gate Kindergarten Association and Free Normal Training School. She was a second or a third cousin of Ingersoll. Eleven years after the occurrence of the incident above related,—that is, after eleven more years of experience in the church,—she wrote to Ingersoll, in part, as follows: "Were I to pass away before you, dear Cousin Robert, I would rather have *you* say a few words over my sleeping dust than any one in the world. I *believe in you*. I believe less and less in theologians. *Experience* has forced this upon me. There are *some* true, good men in the ministry. There are *many* false-hearted men, who do not deserve to be respected. Of this I am sure."

## CHAPTER XV.

### *HIS DOMESTIC TEACHINGS*

Woman, Love, Marriage, Home.

IT HAS been written, that upon the urn including the ashes of our reformer should be the words, "Liberator of Men." Without attributing to the author of the latter any lack of comprehension, I would substitute, "Liberator of Man, Woman, and Child." And even this, as far as woman is concerned, is hardly adequate. Ingersoll was more than the liberator of woman: he was a worshiper, an adorer, of woman; and stood as her uncompromising champion,—her invincible defender from every form and manifestation of barbaric cruelty and theological bigotry, whether it first appeared during the earliest historic times, or during the days preceding his death. No one who is not both profoundly and widely familiar with his thought and work can possibly realize the full truth and justness of this statement. For a comprehensive view of Ingersoll at a given point is not to be obtained at random, at a passing glance. Nor is such a view to be had

through a mental microscope: the field to be surveyed is too large—he is too big a man.

Thus we find that one of his strongest objections to the Jewish and Christian cosmogony and theology, from creation to the ascension of Christ, is the position of inferiority and degradation to which woman is therein assigned. Jehovah's attempt to induce Adam to select "an helpmeet for him" from among the "cattle," "the fowl of the air," and the "beasts of the field"; the failure of Adam so to select a companion, and the consequent creation of woman from one of his ribs, thus placing her on a plane somewhat higher than that of the beast, but lower than that of man; the attributing of all the sins of the world to the first woman, through her tempting of Adam to fall; the curse which Jehovah placed upon maternity; her degradation by sanctioning polygamy, concubinage, and slavery; the failure of Christ to recognize her equality with man; her calumny and stigmatization by the early Christian "fathers"—all this (and much more) gave bitter and unpardonable offense to Ingersoll's sense of justice and of the sacredness of womanhood. Indeed, it would have required only the teachings of the Bible, and the attitude of the church, in reference to woman, to make Ingersoll an implacable enemy of the Christian religion.

And, putting entirely aside, for the present, his purely anti-theological propaganda, what a knight-

like gallant he was! How he did shiver with his intellectual lance the battle-axes and bludgeons which the savagery, selfishness, and cant of "the stronger sex" had raised above the head of woman! We should search in vain this wondrously flexible language of ours for a word of love, adoration, liberation, vindication, or defense that he did not use in her behalf. He was her champion from the first. While the wise judges of the law were denying Susan B. Anthony the right of trial by jury for the crime of having voted, Ingersoll was declaring: "Woman has all the rights I have, and one more, and that is the right to be protected, because she is the weaker." He insisted, that woman is better than man, that she has greater burdens and responsibilities, and that it is for that reason that her faults are considered greater. He contended, that woman is not the intellectual inferior, but, potentially at least, the intellectual equal, of man, and, moreover, that the men who assert the contrary "cannot, by offering themselves in evidence, substantiate their declaration." He believed that she would become man's successful rival in every department of artistic and intellectual endeavor. She had already achieved many triumphs in law, medicine, art, sculpture, and literature, and of the latter had raised the moral standard. He would give to her, as to man, all the education that she is capable of receiving. In other words, he would open wide to her the only gateway that leads to absolute

moral and intellectual freedom. "The parasite of woman is the priest," he said; therefore, he would educate her out of the orthodox church. "There will never be a generation of great men," he declared, "until there has been a generation of free women—of free mothers." (iv 142) He failed to discern either justice or reason in giving to the brutal and ignorant negro (or to the brutal and ignorant white man) the right to vote, while denying it to the refined, educated, and intellectual mother; and so he would extend to woman, not the "privilege" of, but her inalienable moral and political right to, a voice in the affairs of town and city, state and nation. In short, to woman, as to man, he would apply the Ingersollian Golden Rule:—

"Give to every other human being every right that you claim for yourself."

But while this breif résumé will serve to indicate, with some degree of adequacy, Ingersoll's regard for, and loyalty to woman, it is to such passages as the following, that we must turn for the underlying secret of that regard and loyalty. It is through the crystalline clearness of such passages, that we perceive, in woman, the Ingersollian ideal of *humanity* and *beauty*:—

"I not only admire woman as the most beautiful object ever created, but I reverence her as the redeeming glory of humanity, the sanctuary of all the virtues, the pledge of all perfect qualities of heart and head." (viii 531)

And again, to the same effect:—

"The man who has really won the love of one good woman in this world, I do not care if he dies in the ditch a beggar, his life has been a success." (i 358)

This elevation of woman to the very summit of humanity will enable us to understand, not only with the head, but with the heart, Ingersoll's exaltation of love in the following prose-poem, which, for appositeness and delicacy of imagery, poetic truth, insouciance, and verbal melody (be it said in passing), has been equaled by none but the master lyricists of our tongue:—

"Love is the only bow on life's dark cloud. It is the morning and the evening star. It shines upon the babe, and sheds its radiance on the quiet tomb. It is the mother of art, inspirer of poet, patriot and philosopher. It is the air and light of every heart—builder of every home, kindler of every fire on every hearth. It was the first to dream of immortality. It fills the world with melody—for music is the voice of love. Love is the magician, the enchanter, that changes worthless things to joy, and makes right royal kings and queens of common clay. It is the perfume of that wondrous flower, the heart, and without that sacred passion, that divine swoon, we are less than beasts; but with it, earth is heaven, and we are gods." (ii 420)

After the preceding, we shall not wonder that Ingersoll was an uncompromising champion of monogamic marriage,—certainly not if we recall his fundamental maxim: "The only way to be happy yourself is to make somebody else so." But if he was an uncompromising champion of monogamy, he was an implacable enemy of all ideas and practices tending to discredit it. Indeed,

if than to defend marriage there was anything which he did out of deeper conviction, with greater earnestness, it was to attack celibacy; and if than to attack celibacy there was anything which he did out of deeper conviction, with greater earnestness, it was to attack polygamy. To him, celibacy was "the essence of vulgarity"—"the most obscene word in our language," while polygamy was "the infamy of infamies"—a thing the "filth" of which "all the languages of the world are insufficient to express."

With such hatred of polygamy, is it any surprise, by the way, that he regarded the following, from Shakespeare (*Sonnet CXVI*), as "the greatest line in the poetry of the world"—"the sublimest declaration in the literature of the world"?—

"Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds."

And after his characterization of celibacy, as above, can we wonder that the advocates of that doctrine fare at his hands no better than this?—

"I believe in marriage, and I hold in utter contempt the opinions of those long-haired men and short-haired women who denounce the institution of marriage." (i 357)

Or this?—

"Back of all churches is human affection. Back of all theologies is the love of the human heart. Back of all your priests and creeds is

the adoration of the one woman by the one man, and of the one man by the one woman. Back of your faith is the fireside ; back of your folly is the family ; and back of all your holy mistakes and your sacred absurdities is the love of husband and wife, of parent and child." (vi 382)

Continuing in natural sequence, we find that Ingersoll's ideal of the institution which he so steadfastly championed was quite removed from that of the great majority of individuals, theological or lay. To him, the "citadel and fortress of civilization," "the holiest institution among men," was something more than a "solemnized" or "legalized" ceremonial contract. While ecclesiastical, social, and civil institutions, laws, and customs might prescribe the ceremony, and furnish the witnesses, no one but the two parties to the contract—not even God himself, if he exist—could effect the real marriage. All others, whether in heaven or on earth, were simply either curious onlookers or impudent intruders. It was therefore the knot intrinsic of human love, and that alone, which constituted true marriage. He says, the italics being mine:—

"Love is a transfiguration. It ennobles, purifies and glorifies. *In true marriage two hearts burst into flower. Two lives unite. They melt in music. Every moment is a melody.* Love is a revelation, a creation. From love the world borrows its beauty and the heavens their glory. Justice, self-denial, charity and pity are the children of love. \* \* \* Without love all glory fades, the noble falls from life, art dies, music loses meaning and becomes mere motions of the air, and virtue ceases to exist." (vi 384)

After this presentation of the Ingersollian view



of love and marriage, we naturally proceed to a consideration of the importance, or rather, the absolute essentiality and sacredness, which, in his philosophy, the great humanitarian assigned to the family and the home. In his innumerable utterances concerning them, as in nearly all his utterances on other themes, he has not merely expressed the profoundest soul-born reasons and convictions: he has clothed the latter in ideal beauty. Thus, in the following, the family is glorified as the very foundation of all present worth, not only, but as the hope and salvation of the future:—

“Civilization rests upon the family. The good family is the unit of good government. The virtues grow about the holy hearth of home—they cluster, bloom, and shed their perfume round the fireside where the one man loves the one woman. Lover—husband—wife—mother—father—child—home!—without these sacred words, the world is but a lair, and men and women merely beasts.” (ii 251)

And again:—

“I believe in the religion of the family. I believe that the roof-tree is sacred, from the smallest fiber that feels the soft cool clasp of earth, to the topmost flower that spreads its bosom to the sun, and like a spendthrift gives its perfume to the air. The home where virtue dwells with love is like a lily with a heart of fire—the fairest flower in all the world.” (ii 423)

He would convert mankind to this “religion of the family,”—this blessed “gospel of the fire-side”:—

“Let me tell you \* \* \* it is far more important to build a home than to erect a church. The holiest temple beneath the stars is a

home that love has built. And the holiest altar in all the wide world is the fireside around which gather father and mother and the sweet babes." (i 468)

With the world domestically evangelized, or Ingersollized, rather, we should have, not occasional, but innumerable pictures like this:—

"If upon this earth we ever have a glimpse of heaven, it is when we pass a home in winter, at night, and through the windows, the curtains drawn aside, we see the family about the pleasant hearth: the old lady knitting; the cat playing with the yarn; the children wishing they had as many dolls or dollars or knives or something; as there are sparks going out to join the roaring blast; the father reading and smoking, and the clouds rising like incense from the altar of domestic joy. I never passed such a house without feeling that I had received a benediction." (i 390)

And no one with heart and brain ever read such a passage without feeling the same way.

But, as we should naturally suppose, Ingersoll's philosophy offered something more than even the preceding incomparably beautiful and inspiring ideals of love and marriage, of family and home. His "religion of the family," his "gospel of the fireside," did not end with a glimpse of the love and loving father, mother, and babes "about the pleasant hearth"—did not conclude with the "benediction" which we have just received. The philosophy that placed all human life on the firm basis of happiness as "the only good" did not content itself with pictures, which, even though momentarily real, might be, after all, as purely temporal as transient, as they were beautiful. Far from it

that philosophy would make those pictures the idealistic reflections of enduring realities. Indeed, it was with the "benediction," that Ingersoll's domestic evangelization really commenced.

I have stated that Ingersoll was not only the "Liberator of Man," but the "Liberator of Man, Woman, and Child." Having accordingly shown, as fully as is here practicable, that he was woman's liberator outside the family circle, it is my next pleasure to show that he was her liberator within that circle,—the liberator of the wife and mother.

"But from what," will perhaps be asked, "did he liberate her?" He liberated her from the idea that there must be a "head of the family"—a "boss." He liberated her from the heartless time-sanctified doctrine of the divine rights of domestic kings—from the tyrant of the fireside—the Jehovah of the hearth. He demolished the latter's petty throne, and on its ruins made "a happy fireside clime to weans and wife." He commanded the husband to be a gentleman; bade the wife arise, Minerva-like, from her swollen knees; and he wrote, in glowing gold, on the somber walls of millions of orthodox homes: "Liberty, Equality, and Love." If this alone had been his earthly task, pæans of praise should rise to his memory from every hearth in Christendom.

Any idea that savored of tyranny filled his liberty-loving, justice-loving soul with indignation and repugnance. To him, tyranny in one place

was the same as tyranny in another. In this, he was absolutely and fundamentally consistent. "The Universe," he declared, "ought to be a pure democracy—an infinite republic without a tyrant and without a chain." (xii 21) Because he believed in liberty and justice, he rejected the tyrant of heaven; and because he rejected the latter, he rejected the tyrants of earth, including the tyrant in the home. Completely and perfectly civilized, he was as consistent in rejecting tyranny in all three places as the savage is in accepting it in all three. The average civilized man—the average American—say—is inconsistent here: he differs from Ingersoll about as much as he differs from the savage. He believes in tyranny in heaven, democracy in the White House, and tyranny in the home. Ingersoll believed in democracy everywhere.

And in his domestic philosophy, "democracy" has much more than its usual significance. For the Ingersollian ideal of home excludes not only the time-honored notion of the domestic tyrant,— "the head of the family," the "boss,"—but also the idea of duty and obligation as well. While the ideal democracy exists by virtue of a government which derives its powers from the consent of the governed, and which, therefore, it is the common obligation and duty of those concerned to support and obey, the Ingersollian home exists solely in the mutual adoration of husband and wife,—the common affection of parents and child:—

## WOMAN, LOVE, MARRIAGE, HOME

"In Love's fair realm husband and wife are king and queen, sceptred and crowned alike and seated on the self-same throne."  
(*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 273)

And again :—

"The highest ideal of a family is where all are equal—where love has superseded authority—where each seeks the good of all, and where none obey \* \* \* ." (vi 381)

The ideal democracy is government by consent: the Ingersollian home is the anarchy of love. In the latter, the husband loves the wife, "not only for his own sake, but for her sake. He longs to make her happy—to fill her life with joy." (xii 293) And it is upon this basis that the great liberator proffers the following advice:—

"Whoever marries simply for himself will make a mistake; but whoever loves a woman so well that he says, 'I will make her happy,' makes no mistake. And so with the woman who says, 'I will make him happy.' There is only one way to be happy, and that is to make somebody else so, and,"—

he adds, in that familiar straight-out Ingersollian style, which unmistakably means that there is a man behind it all—

"you cannot be happy by going 'cross lots; you have got to go the regular turnpike road." (i 364)

As would naturally be supposed, in championing the ideal home as the *sine qua non* of happiness, "the only good," there are, besides the "boss,"—"the head of the family,"—two classes of husbands

whom the great liberator of woman does not overlook—to whom, indeed, he does not hesitate to impart some seemingly wholesome advice—"cross" husbands and "stingy" husbands.

Of the former, he inquires, in a tone which itself elicits a melancholy negation:—

"What right has he to murder the sunshine of a day? What right has he to assassinate the joy of life?"

And he adds, for the benefit of this cross husband:—

"When you go home you ought to go like a ray of light—so that it will, even in the night, burst out of the doors and windows and illuminate the darkness." (i 365)

As to the stingy husband, it is inconceivable, despite the strength of religious prejudice, that even the most orthodox of wives and mothers could fail to appreciate the following:—

"Do you know that I have known men who would trust their wives with their hearts and their honor but not with their pocketbooks; not with a dollar. When I see a man of that kind, I always think he knows which of these articles is the most valuable. Think of making your wife a beggar! Think of her having to ask you every day for a dollar, or for two dollars or fifty cents! 'What did you do with that dollar I gave you last week?' Think of having a wife that is afraid of you! What kind of children do you expect to have with a beggar and a coward for their mother? Oh, I tell you if you have but a dollar in the world, and you have got to spend it, spend it like a king; spend it as though it were a dry leaf and you the owner of unbounded forests! That's the way to spend it! I had rather be a beggar and spend my last dollar like a king, than be a king and spend my money like a beggar! If it has got to go, let it go!" (i 367)

And when some well-meaning heretic to the Ingersollian domestic gospel,—some thrifty gentleman who has never known the ecstasies of love,—objects that “Your doctrine about loving and wives and all that is splendid for the rich, but it won’t do for the poor,” the great apostle of love replies:—

“I tell you \* \* \* there is more love in the homes of the poor than in the palaces of the rich. The meanest hut with love in it is a palace fit for the gods, and a palace without love is a den only fit for wild beasts. That is my doctrine! You cannot be so poor that you cannot help somebody. Good nature is the cheapest commodity in the world; and love is the only thing that will pay ten per cent. to borrower and lender both. Do not tell me that you have got to be rich!” (i 368) “No matter whether you are rich or poor, treat your wife as though she were a splendid flower, and she will fill your life with perfume and with joy.” (i 371)

Under the latter conditions, even the poorest of men would be a Cræsus; for “Joy is wealth,” and “Happiness is the legal tender of the soul.”

Nor does the preceding, amply as it would seem to establish Ingersoll’s preëminence as champion of the fireside, afford the most significant evidence of the superlative importance which, in his philosophy, he assigns to family and home. Many passages uttered or written in connection with subjects widely divergent from the latter, and from one another, afford even more significant evidence. They are found, here and there, throughout all his productions. Indeed, the more comprehensively and critically we examine his work, and

the longer we contemplate his life, the more certain does it become that the hearth-fire is the sun around which all the planets of his system revolve. Whether we read his lay utterances, his legal and political addresses, his anti-theological lectures and discussions, his tributes to departed worth, his poetry—whatever of his we read—we find the same precious element: the hearth-fire lights the page. In economics, in politics, in religion, the roof-tree is the standard by which all else is measured—the criterion for acceptance or rejection.

Thus he objects alike to socialism, slavery, polygamy, and "free love" because they divide the family or destroy the home. Similarly, he objects to the Christian doctrine of immortality because it offers, ostensibly through the lips of Christ, "everlasting life" to "everyone that hath forsaken \* \* \* father, or mother, or wife, or children \* \* \*" (i 467), in this life, and because it divides the family in the life which it promises. "I will never desert the one I love for the promise of any god," he declares. He opposes Sabbatarianism because the "poor mechanic, working all the week, \* \* \* needs a day \* \* \* to live with wife and child \* \* \* . And his weary wife needs a breath of sunny air, away from street and wall, amid the hills, or by the margin of the sea, where she can sit and prattle with her babe and fill with happy dreams the long, glad day." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 278) "Maternity," he says, "is



the most pathetic fact in the universe" (viii 428)—mother and wife the holiest words in every tongue. "It is far more important to love your wife than to love God" (i 467), he insists; and he makes of the ideal husband a worshiper in the noblest sense: "To build a home, to keep a fire on the sacred hearth, to fill with joy the heart of her who rocks the cradle of your child. This is worship." After saying, in his tribute to Mills, that "wife and children pressed their kisses on his lips," he adds: "This is enough. The longest life contains no more. This fills the vase of joy." (xii 403)

Of such expressions, there is in *Ingersoll* no end; but it is perhaps in that greatest of war-paintings, *A Vision of War*, that his domestic love and sympathy rise to the loftiest heights, or rather, sink to the most touching depths: for it is pathos which is there achieved. It is there, at the sound "of heroic bugles," that "some are parting with mothers who hold them and press them to their hearts again and again, and say nothing." It is there that departing patriots "are bending over cradles, kissing babes that are asleep." It is there that others "are talking with wives, and endeavoring with brave words, spoken in the old tones, to drive from their hearts the awful fear." It is there that the wife is "standing in the door with the babe in her arms—standing in the sunlight sobbing. At the turn of the road a hand waves—she

answers by holding high in her loving arms the child. He is gone, and forever." (ix 167) This is dramatic, tragic—the perfection of pathos! And it was, I repeat, Ingersoll's profound domestic love and sympathy, blending with the graceful flame of his genius, that created it—one of the greatest qualities of the greatest poetry.

But of all the precious words that he wrought from feelings of ruby and thoughts of gold, those most clearly disclosing his sense of the utter vanity and insignificance of all else in comparison with the home are yet to follow. It will be recalled by the reader of Chapter IV, that, while Ingersoll was unable (when in Paris in 1875) to locate, through the superintendent of Père Lachaise, the final resting-place of Auguste Comte, he did locate "the grave of the old Napoleon." It was during his contemplation by that "magnificent tomb of gilt and gold"; it was while he "gazed upon the sarcophagus of rare and nameless marble"—while he "leaned over the balustrade and thought about the career of the greatest soldier of the modern world," from "the banks of the Seine" to Saint Helena, that he was moved to utter, in the now world-famous "Soliloquy," words which disclosed in their author as great a genius for domestic love and human sympathy as Napoleon had possessed for murder:—

"I thought of the orphans and widows he had made—of the tears that had been shed for his glory, and of the only woman who ever

loved him, pushed from his heart by the cold hand of ambition. And I said, I would rather have been a French peasant and worn wooden shoes. I would rather have lived in a hut with a vine growing over the door, and the grapes growing purple in the amorous kisses of the autumn sun. I would rather have been that poor peasant, with my loving wife by my side, knitting as the day died out of the sky—with my children upon my knees and their arms about me—I would rather have been that man, and gone down to the tongueless silence of the dreamless dust, than to have been that imperial impersonation of force and murder, known as Napoleon the Great." (i 370)

Ah, that "hut with a vine growing over the door"! It takes a great man to prefer that hut to an empire and "a magnificent tomb of gilt and gold, fit almost for a deity dead"—a great man.

And not only did Ingersoll place domestic love above all else; not only would he evangelize the world with his "gospel of the fireside"; he would soothe mankind with the beautiful thought that love is eternal. Those who recall that the Great Agnostic traced the hope of a future life to human love in the present,—to "a flower that grows on the edge of the grave,"—will not wonder at this—at the following wishful vision of immortal love on earth:—

"And do you know, it is a splendid thing to think that the woman you really love will never grow old to you. Through the wrinkles of time, through the mask of years, if you really love her, you will always see the face you loved and won. And a woman who really loves a man does not see that he grows old; he is not decrepit to her; he does not tremble; he is not old; she always sees the same gallant gentleman who won her hand and heart. I like to think of it in that way; I like to think that love is eternal. And to love in that way and then go down the hill of life together, and as you go down, hear,

perhaps, the laughter of grandchildren, while the birds of joy and love sing once more in the leafless branches of the tree of age." (i 371)

There is another picture, the only one, perhaps, in the gallery of English letters, which would make for this a perfect companion-piece. The two ought not to be longer apart:—

"John Anderson, my jo, John  
When we were first acquent,  
Your locks were like the raven,  
Your bonnie brow was brent;  
But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snaw;  
But blessings on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson, my jo.

"John Anderson, my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither;  
And monie a canty day, John,  
We've had wi' ane anither:  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
But hand in hand we'll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson, my jo."

And just as these two utterances are inseparably united in our hearts and memories, not because of any resemblance in literary form, but because of the affection and fidelity which permeate both,—which are the origin of both,—so with many other utterances of the same authors. And so with the authors themselves. Indeed, to the worshiper at the shrine of humanitarian genius, not only the qualities mentioned, but the tenderness and the ardent love of liberty and justice which

they alike manifested, have long since transformed the names of Robert Burns and Robert Ingersoll into perfect synonyms for each other.

It was said by Ingersoll, that "men are oaks, women are vines, children are flowers." We have admiringly beheld the "oaks" and the "vines," more especially the latter, and have heard his teachings concerning their proper climate and environment. Let us enjoy with him, in our next chapter, the perfume of the "flowers."

CHAPTER XVI.  
*HIS DOMESTIC TEACHINGS*  
(concluded)

Children—Their Rearing and Education.

SINCE the preceding presentation of Ingersoll as the liberator and champion of the wife and mother necessarily involves the logical correlative that he was also the liberator and champion of children, the latter fact requires no specific insistence here; and we may therefore pass, without undue delay, to the presentation of his views on the subject concerned. But we shall be able to appreciate more fully, more clearly, more justly, the extent to which he was the liberator and champion of children, if we recall, in so passing, the principal counter ideas of the subject which were prevalent when he began his anti-theological humanitarian crusade.

I refer to the ideas of childhood which were prevalent when he began his crusade, and I term that crusade *anti-theological humanitarian*, for the simple and obvious reason that the ideas of childhood to which he objected were indissolubly associated

with orthodox Christianity. Beneath them, like mire beneath a bed of noxious weeds, was the dogma of total depravity, while above and around them were the ominous and threatening clouds of foreordination, predestination, and everlasting punishment. In the midst of this horrid nightmare, this mental miasma, this moral morass, the lot of childhood was pitiable in the extreme. The sweetest child,—the fairest human flower that blossomed into smiles in the sunshine of a mother's eyes,—was scarcely more fortunate than a domestic animal. Indeed, it was, in one respect, less fortunate; for the animal had no soul to be depraved in the first place, nor to be damned in the second. Surely this meant, to the proverbial dog, something more than the crumbs that fell from his master's table!

In those gloomy orthodox days, instead of being welcomed as blossoms are welcomed in the sunshine and fragrance of the garden, children were regarded as divine charges—incarnations of awful responsibilities from on high. Parents believed in a tyrant in heaven. They knew precisely what he exacted from them, and they were intelligent enough, and only enough, to recognize a perfect analogy between their relations to that tyrant and their children's relations to them. They realized that they themselves could not be orthodox and happy at the same time; and so the melodious laughter, the irrepressibly joyous prattle, of child-

hood became, in their ears, a hideous din of irreverence. Feeling the grave responsibility that rested upon them, they sought to secure for their children supernal bliss hereafter, in exchange for orthodox misery now. They transformed the home into a penitentiary, the nursery into a sepulcher, the cradle into a coffin. Every day then was what the really orthodox would like to have Sunday now, and every Sunday then was what our most exemplary penitentiary would be if it were located in the center of our largest cemetery. Certain as these parents were of all things theological, there were at least three things of which they were doubly certain, despite the mutual contradiction between the last two: That "hell is paved with infants' skulls," that all children are totally depraved, and that 'to spare the rod is to spoil the child.'<sup>1</sup> They knew that countless children had been damned, that countless others would be, that all ought to be, but that a few might be spared if the rod was not. There being no means of distinguishing the "few," excepting perhaps the ordinary signs of ill health, which frequently passed for piety, they applied the rod with uniform generosity.

Of course, even as early as the beginning of Ingersoll's career, many parents—and I here refer to them as parents only—had passed far above and

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<sup>1</sup> "Spare the rod and spoil the child."—Butler's *Hudibras*.

"He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."—Proverbs, xiii: 24.



beyond this stage of primitive orthodoxy. They had already emerged from the jungle, and were commencing to breathe the air of freedom,—to welcome the dawn's expanding dome,—to bask in the sunlight of kindness and reason. In short, they were growing somewhat heretical. Instead of putting their "stubborn and rebellious" sons to death, as directed in Exodus and Leviticus;<sup>1</sup> instead of delivering them to the "elders" of the city, to be stoned to death, as directed in Deuteronomy,<sup>2</sup> and in the New England blue-laws,—laws based largely upon the Bible,—they chose to prolong their lives and "break" their "wills," in accordance with the more humane, if less scriptural, teachings of some such gentle kindergarten advocate as John Wesley, for example. To be sure, it often happened that this preference for the Wesleyan method produced precisely the same result that was formerly produced by the more strictly biblical method. But even so, the parents could console themselves with the blessed thought, that both methods bore the orthodox sanction; and that even if, in the application of the more modern one, the exigencies of the case concerned required the exercise of seemingly undue zeal, they had done what they conceived to be their "level best."

Thus in the average orthodox home, the idea of arbitrary and humiliating obedience, born of

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<sup>1</sup>Exod. xxi : 15-17; Lev. xx : 9.

<sup>2</sup>Deut. xxi : 18-21.

tyranny and "original sin," was carried out in detailed perfection. From the iron throne of Jehovah in heaven, to the cradle of the tenderest babe on earth, the chain of cruelty hung unbroken. The husband lived "in fear and trembling," at the frightful mercy of Jehovah; the wife, at the mercy of both Jehovah and the husband; the children, at the mercy of all. They were the sport and prey, the helpless galley-slaves, of orthodoxy. Under such conditions, the ideal family life,—the ideal child-life,—was not only unknown, but impossible. The sky was overcast; the clouds seemed always lowering, the atmosphere gloomy and oppressive. Though the day seemed long, the night came early and the real hearth-fire was out: it had never been kindled. The parents, fearing the untimely removal of their children as a jealous judgment of Jehovah, often withheld from them their natural love. The parental affection of children thus reared scarcely differed in kind or degree from that which the whipped cur manifests for its master.

If we apply here what seems to be the supreme test of nobility, namely, that the commiseration of an individual is invariably in direct ratio to the helplessness of its object, we shall scarcely need to be told, that, against the old ideas of rearing children,—against the Wesleyan nursery methods,—Ingersoll revolted with as intense indignation as against orthodox Christianity itself. Indeed, we shall readily perceive that his "gospel of the fir

side" was not circumscribed by the relations of husband and wife, but that it encompassed, with a beneficence as wide as it was tender, the cradle of even the lowliest babe. He says:—

"If women have been slaves, what shall I say of children; of the little children in alleys and sub-cellars; the little children who turn pale when they hear their father's footsteps; the little children who run away when they only hear their names called by the lips of a mother; little children—the children of poverty, the children of crime, the children of brutality, wherever they are—flotsam and jetsam upon the wild, mad sea of life—*my heart goes out to them, one and all.*" (i 372)<sup>1</sup>

Passing from this declaration of sympathy and commiseration to his ideas and teachings on the subject of childhood, we find that the latter, like the rest of his philosophy, are preëminently sane, natural, and humane—the unified product of a perfectly logical brain and a perfectly human heart—the triune efflorescence of reason, compassion, and love of the ideal. Nothing is more evident in any of his works than is this fact throughout his utterances concerning the treatment of children. Wherever he touches the subject, purposively or incidentally, it is clarified and ennobled by the inimitable Ingersollian garnishment of reason and beauty.

In the first place, since no one is born of his own volition, Ingersoll taught, as a fundamental proposition of reason and justice, that every babe should be sincerely welcomed. Not in even the remotest

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<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.

sense should it be regarded or treated as either a theological charge or an economic burden. Next to maternity itself stood, in his tender and sympathetic regard, the helplessness and innocence of childhood. Gifted, like the born poet that he was, with imaginative sympathy which enabled him, for the time, to live and love, to yearn and suffer, as a little child, and perceiving, as only the intuitive philosopher can, how absolutely dependent is the salvation of the future upon the cradles of the present, he believed and taught that "a child should know no more sorrow than a bird or a flower." This was but a natural idealistic sequence of his fundamental declaration, that every babe should be sincerely welcomed. For the sweet children,—the stainless flowers of human kind,—he would have the air and light of liberty,—the sunshine of love and affection,—everywhere. Concerning the old idea, that "little children should be seen, not heard"; that they should always be somewhat serious; and that, at table, they should deport themselves as though eating were a religious ceremony, he said:—

"I like to see the children at table, and hear each one telling of the wonderful things he has seen and heard. I like to hear the clatter of knives and forks and spoons mingling with their happy voices. I had rather hear it than any opera that was ever put upon the boards. Let the children have liberty. Be honest and fair with them; be just; be tender, and they will make you rich in love and joy." (i 388)

He spurned the very thought of limiting their

happiness, as is shown by this matchless eloquence, aimed at the Puritan Sabbath—the day which cast so dark a shadow over his own boyhood:—

“The laugh of a child will make the holiest day more sacred still. Strike with hand of fire, O weird musician! thy harp strung with Apollo's golden hair; fill the vast cathedral aisles with symphonies sweet and dim, deft toucher of the organ keys; blow, bugler, blow, until the silver notes do touch and kiss the moonlit waves, and charm the lovers wandering midst the vine-clad hills: but know, your sweetest strains are discords all, compared with childhood's happy laugh—the laugh that fills the eyes with light and every heart with joy. O rippling river of laughter! thou art the blessed boundary line between the beasts and men; and every wayward wave of thine doth drown some fretful fiend of care. O Laughter! rose-lipped daughter of Joy, make dimples enough in thy cheeks to catch and hold and glorify all the tears of grief.” (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 184)

And so, with Ingersoll, the happiness of childhood was of transcendent importance.

As to the general conduct of children, he knew that, in at least one fundamental respect, the latter are precisely like their elders—they seek happiness, according to their light; and he believed that if, in this purely natural course, mistakes are made, they call, not for the qualities of a parental Torquemada or martinet, but for reason and justice, as in the case of adults, and for something more—affection. He said:—

“I tell you the children have the same rights that we have, and we ought to treat them as though they were human beings. They should be reared with love, with kindness, with tenderness, and not with brutality.” (i 372)

He denounced the heartless, infamous doctrine, that children can be "spoiled" with love and affection. Indeed, it was these very influences, guided by intelligence, that he proposed as the only agency of correction or reformation:—

"When your child commits a wrong, take it in your arms; let it feel your heart beat against its heart; let the child know that you really and truly and sincerely love it. Yet some Christians, good Christians, when a child commits a fault, drive it from the door and say: 'Never do you darken this house again.' Think of that! And then these same people will get down on their knees and ask God to take care of the child they have driven from home. I will never ask God to take care of my children unless I am doing my level best in that same direction.

"But I will tell you what I say to my children: 'Go where you will; commit what crime you may; fall to what depth of degradation you may; you can never commit any crime that will shut my door, my arms, or my heart to you. As long as I live you shall have one sincere friend.'" (i 374)

After the preceding, it may be well, in the interest of those who would retain their children beneath the native roof-tree, to quote the following:—

"\* \* \* Make your home happy. Be honest with them. Divide fairly with them in everything.

"Give them a little liberty and love, and you can not drive them out of your house. They will want to stay there. \* \* \*

"\* \* \* do not commence at the cradle and shout 'Don't!' 'Don't!' 'Stop!' That is nearly all that is said to a child from the cradle until he is twenty-one years old, and when he comes of age other people begin saying 'Don't!' And the church says 'Don't!' and the party he belongs to says 'Don't!'

"I despise that way of going through this world. Let us have liberty—just a little. Call me infidel, call me atheist, call me what

## CHILDREN—THEIR REARING AND EDUCATION

you will, I intend so to treat my children, that they can come to my grave and truthfully say: 'He who sleeps here never gave us a moment of pain. From his lips, now dust, never came to us an unkind word.'" (i 375)

This resolution, so manly, so noble, so near to pathos in its tenderness, leaves in the mind no doubt, that, of all the hideous, inhuman features of the old doctrine of rearing children, the idea of corporal punishment—"the gospel of ferule and whips," as he termed it—filled Ingersoll with greatest indignation. Possessing a heart that instinctively shrank from the infliction of pain; dowered with imaginative sympathy that not only enabled but impelled him to put himself in the place of others, even of babes, the mental picture of parents beating and scarring their own flesh was one which he could not contemplate with toleration:—

"Think of being fed and clothed by children you had whipped—whose flesh you had scarred! Think of feeling in the hour of death upon your withered lips, your withered cheeks, the kisses and the tears of one whom you had beaten—upon whose flesh were still the marks of your lash!" (vi 513)

Whether "conscience is born of love," as stated by Shakespeare, and just what weight we should attach to Ingersoll's suggestion that conduct depends upon the imagination, it may be difficult to say; but it does seem certain, that, if all possessed imagination equal to his, there would be no beaters of babes.

Notwithstanding the strong influence which sentiment exerted in his revolt at the idea of corporal punishment, just as strong if not stronger influence was exerted by reason. For here, again, "his brain took counsel of his heart." This is clearly and forcibly evident in many a passage like the following:—

"The man who cannot raise children without whipping them ought not to have them. The man who would mar the flesh of a boy or girl is unfit to have the control of a human being. The father who keeps a rod in his house keeps a relic of barbarism in his heart. There is nothing reformatory in punishment; nothing reformatory in fear. Kindness, guided by intelligence, is the only reforming force. An appeal to brute force is an abandonment of love and reason, and puts father and child upon a savage equality; the savageness in the heart of the father prompting the use of the rod or club, produces a like savageness in the victim." (vii 173)

These splendid convictions—these royal children of the heart and brain—often found expression in rare rhetorical form. Was more pungent irony, more humiliating satire, than the following ever used in a sweeter, manlier cause?—

"I do not believe in the government of the lash. If any one of you ever expects to whip your children again, I want you to have a photograph taken of yourself when you are in the act, with your face red with vulgar anger, and the face of the little child, with eyes swimming in tears and the little chin dimpled with fear, like a piece of water struck by a sudden cold wind. Have the picture taken. If that little child should die, I cannot think of a sweeter way to spend an autumn afternoon than to go out to the cemetery, when the maples are clad in tender gold, and little scarlet runners are coming, like poems of regret, from the sad heart of the earth—and sit down upon the grave and look at that photograph, and think of the flesh now dust that you beat." (i 375)



## CHILDREN—THEIR REARING AND EDUCATION

And why, it may be asked in passing, did he suggest "an autumn afternoon"? Because afternoon, the death of day, the retrospective time, and autumn, the death of nature, the season of sadness, make all sad things seem doubly so. He suggested an autumn afternoon because he was a poet and artist, who, unlike the other great reformers (as already pointed out), instinctively clothed his profoundest moral and intellectual convictions in the garments of ideal beauty.

As showing further, and perhaps even more intimately, his tender regard for childhood, the following letters to Mr. and Mrs. John C. Ingersoll, at the death of their son, are of interest here :—

" 400 FIFTH AVENUE, Dec. 20, '91.

" DEAR JOHN AND LOLLA :

" I know that your hearts are almost broken over the death of dear little Walston—and I know that I can say nothing that can save you a tear. But there is one thing in which there is at least a ray of comfort :—The dear little fellow had no fear, and went away on the out-flowing tide of sleep. He had not lived long enough to have a dread of death. That is something in which there is a little comfort. He is now beyond all suffering, and that is a sweet thought. But whether there is any comfort or not, I know that you must bear the burden. I wish I could help you, but I cannot. All I can say is that I love you both, and that my heart feels your grief. All send love to you and yours and to the dear babe that lies asleep.

" Yours always,

" ROBERT."

A day later, prevented from being present :—

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. John C. Ingersoll, who died in 1903, at Colon, Colombia, while American consul there, was the son of the late Hon. Ebon Clark Ingersoll.

" \* \* \* There are no words deep enough and tender enough to soften your grief, or to lighten your burden. I know that the stars have all gone out, and the world seems poor and barren. \* \* \* Time, of course, will in some little degree dull the edge of pain. I wish I could write words of meaning enough to lessen your sense of loss. But I cannot. I know how I should feel under like circumstances, and so I know that my words are nothing. But I love you both. Kiss the dear babe Walston for me. \* \* \* "

Still later:—

"Had it been possible, I should have been with you when you laid little Walston to rest. I thought of you all the day. I know that you will bear it because you cannot choose, but it seems almost a sacrilege for me to write about your loss. \* \* \* A world with death in it is an awful world—but we are compelled to carry our burdens, and the best way is to forget if we can. \* \* \* My heart goes out to the mother that has buried her babe."

These letters, which recall, in sympathy and pathos, the wondrous words of "Whence and Whither?" in Chapter V, could be greatly multiplied.

No less characteristically radical, interesting, and valuable than his ideas of the purely domestic side of rearing children are his ideas of the more intellectual aspect of the problem. Here also love, liberty, and honesty,—the last two especially,—should constitute, according to him, the prevailing influence. Of the necessity for mental honesty, he says:—

"Let us be honest. Let us preserve the veracity of our souls. Let education commence in the cradle—in the lap of the loving mother. This is the first school. The teacher, the mother, should be absolutely honest.

"The nursery should not be an asylum for lies.

## CHILDREN—THEIR REARING AND EDUCATION

"Parents should be modest enough to be truthful—honest enough to admit their ignorance. Nothing should be taught as true that cannot be demonstrated." (iv 106)

And of the necessity for mental liberty:—

"We have no right to enslave our children. We have no right to bequeath chains and manacles to our heirs. We have no right to leave a legacy of mental degradation.

"Liberty is the birthright of all. Parents should not deprive their children of the great gifts of nature. We cannot all leave lands and gold to those we love; but we can leave Liberty, and that is of more value than all the wealth of India." (xii 325)

Paradoxical as it will appear to some, there was in his plea for the liberty of childhood an earnest plea for a restriction of that very liberty. Speaking only a few months before his death, he observed:—

"William Kingdon Clifford, one of the greatest men of this century, said: 'If there is one lesson that history forces upon us in every page, it is this: Keep your children away from the priest, or he will make them the enemies of mankind.'

"In every orthodox Sunday-school children are taught to believe in devils. Every little brain becomes a menagerie, filled with wild beasts from hell. The imagination is polluted with the deformed, the monstrous and malicious. To fill the minds of children with leering fiends—with mocking devils—is one of the meanest and basest of crimes. In these pious prisons—these divine dungeons—these Protestant and Catholic inquisitions—children are tortured with these cruel lies. Here they are taught that to really think is wicked; that to express your honest thought is blasphemy; and that to live a free and joyous life, depending on fact instead of faith, is the sin against the Holy Ghost.

"Children thus taught—thus corrupted and deformed—become the enemies of investigation—of progress. They are no longer true to themselves. They have lost the veracity of the soul. In the language of Professor Clifford, 'they are the enemies of the human race.'

"So I say to all fathers and mothers, keep your children away from priests; away from orthodox Sunday-schools; away from the slaves of superstition." (iv 410)

This was the restriction, and the only restriction, for which he pleaded—a restriction of physical liberty for the sake of mental and moral freedom.

With the children thus protected at the start from the warping, blighting, degrading influences of superstition—with "Love the only priest," according to one of his fundamental maxims—and with absolute mental honesty and perfect mental liberty the aim and gift of every parent, Ingersoll would undertake the realization of the public educational reforms and ideals indicated in Chapter XII. He would undertake the mental, moral and physical development—harmonious and unified—of every child. He would undertake the process not merely of "universal education," which is already advocated and practised by even the narrowest sects, but the process of *educating the child universally*, which has never been practised nor advocated by any sect, nor allowed in even a secular public school. He would undertake the realization of a curriculum in which nature, and nature only should bound the intellectual horizon of the pupil. He would commence at the cradle. In the sunlight of love, in the open air of honesty and liberty he would shape the lever of "real education"—"the only lever capable of raising mankind."

## CHAPTER XVII.

### *DID HE PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED?*

IT IS, or rather, it ought to be universally recognized, as a fundamental principle, that a precept or a doctrine is valuable solely for what it is in itself. Precepts and doctrines in the realm of logic, of ethics,—of philosophy in general,—like commodities in the realm of commerce, are worth precisely what they in themselves will bring. They neither gain nor lose, from the viewpoint of pure reason, because of the morality or the immorality, the sincerity or the insincerity, of him who professes or proclaims them. The multiplication table, recited parrot-like by one who could not correctly apply it in a simple problem, would be quite as true as if recited by a Descartes or a Newton. The Golden Rule, repeated by the most abandoned and dissolute of wretches, would be just as safe a moral guide as if it fell from the lips of Confucius or of Christ.

But, unfortunately, the average man is not yet a thoroughly logical being ; and, consequently, he is apt to value the things that he reads or hears, not at what they themselves are worth, but at what

they themselves are worth, plus or minus the personal worth of him who professes or proclaims them. Thus is impersonal philosophy debited or credited with the personality of the philosopher the impersonal message, with the personality of the man.

But if mankind is chargeable with illogic in failing to distinguish philosophy from the philosopher, it is, conversely, to be credited with judging the philosopher himself, not by his philosophy alone, but by his philosophy and his conduct together. It is to be credited with judging, not by theories, but by theories and acts; not by words, but by words and deeds; not by mentality, but by mentality and manhood. It demands not only ideals, but a practical application of ideals. It recognizes, that, while it is "a great thing to preach philosophy," it is "far greater to live it." Hence the triteness of the query, "Does he practise what he preaches?" If the latter elicits an affirmative answer, mankind accepts the philosopher concerned; if a negative answer, it rejects him—too often his philosophy included.

Now, we have examined, somewhat at length, the philosophy of Ingersoll. We have pointed out his ideals. We have ascertained his views of the most important subjects of daily human interest. We have studied his "gospel of the fireside," and his "religion of humanity." We have read his advice concerning the treatment of wife and child, of the

poor and unfortunate, and of the criminal. And we have seen, that his ideal was lofty; that his views were reasonable; that his advice was sound and good. In other words, we have concluded that his philosophy was of the highest, the noblest, and the best.

But perhaps we have not fully decided as to the philosopher himself. It is therefore peculiarly fitting that we now ask concerning Ingersoll the usual question, "Did he practise what he preached?"

Those whose knowledge of his personal life has not been acquired wholly from the incidental references thereto in the preceding chapters will surely appreciate the sense of delicacy which any writer must feel in undertaking a reply to the query just propounded. What, enter unbidden the sacred precincts of the fireside king! Standing upon this mental threshold, I feel that one who would take a forward step should wear the white robes of perfection—that he should be clad in vestments of devotion already consecrated at the innermost shrine of the ideal!

As stated in Chapter III, Ingersoll was married on February 13, 1862, at Groveland, Tazewell County, Ill., to Miss Eva A. Parker. He was then twenty-eight years of age.

Accepting as true the adage, that "all the world loves a lover," this marriage must have been blessed with far more than the usual abundance of well-wishes; for it is morally certain, that,

should we begin even before Shakespeare's time,—with the earliest predecessors of *Romeo* and *Juliet*,—we should not be able to find, either in literature or in life, a more perfect example of mutual devotion than that with which Robert Ingersoll and Eva Parker enriched the annals of human affection. And, whether we accept or reject the other adage, or rather, the teleological notion, that men and women are "*made* for each other," we must admit that here were a man and a woman who, in effect at least, had *lived* and *waited*, and would continue to live, for each other. Not only was theirs a perfect union of hearts: it was a perfect union of minds—an ideal blending of love and intellectual sympathies. For, as stated in the chapter last mentioned, the Parkers, for generations, had been Freethinkers; and Eva A. Parker was not an exception in this respect. Unusually endowed with intelligence and the spirit of humanity and freedom—"a woman without superstition," to quote her husband's exact words of her—she was to Robert Ingersoll (again quoting his words) "the one of all the world."

But kind as was fortune in effecting a union so perfect, so absolutely ideal, she did not cease her beneficent ministrations; and two daughters came to enhance and share the joys of the Ingersoll fireside. They were Eva R., born at Groveland, and Maud R., born at Peoria. The first and elder became, in 1889, the wife of Mr. Walston H. Brown



the banker and railroad-builder. But she did not thereupon pass from the family circle which included her distinguished father. There was no table of subtraction in the Ingersollian domestic arithmetic; and so, instead of one's being taken away by the oftentimes cruel god of marriage, simply another chair was drawn at the fireside of the Great Agnostic.

To say of the children of most men,—of even the children of most great men,—that they love and respect and admire their father, would doubtless do full justice to the facts. Not so of the daughters of Ingersoll: they did far more. In childhood they loved him; in youth they adored him; in womanhood they adored and admired him as the one ideal embodiment of domestic affection and moral and intellectual grandeur. For, although enjoying in religious matters, in accordance with the Ingersollian Golden Rule, "every right" that their parents claimed for themselves, they became, on reaching the age of intellectual discretion and have since steadfastly remained, in keeping with their maternal traditions, in full and perfect accord with the opinions and teachings of their father. "We all feel," wrote Mrs. Eva R. Ingersoll-Brown, in expression of the sentiments, not only of herself and sister, but of her mother and, in fact, the entire household, "that he is doing the greatest and noblest work of this world."

It must ever seem useless to postulate what

might or might not have occurred in the life of given genius but for the one or the other fact or circumstance. It will seem doubly useless to whomever accepts the philosophy, that "all that has been possible has happened." Nevertheless we cannot pass this point without at least suggesting the speculation as to what share of the world's gratitude for the wealth of courage and heroism, elevating and ennobling sentiment, and of artistic beauty, with which Ingersoll dowered mankind, is due to the three (particularly the first of the three) noble women who completed the circle around 'the holy hearth of his home.' Had fate decreed that Robert Ingersoll should walk alone life's hard, uncertain path, he might still have walked the intellectual giant, the friend of justice, and the fearless advocate and invincible champion of physical and mental liberty. He might have carried the torch of reason, the shield of truth; and the embattled hosts of injustice, bigotry, and superstition, pierced by the deadly arrows of his logic—arrows sweetly poisoned with scorn and satire—might still have fallen in their last pangs, or, mortally wounded, have skulked to cover on either side. He might and doubtless would, have given to us what is most intellectual in a score or more of the great productions previously mentioned; but it seems equally certain, that, had it not been for the wife, in whom he realized his heart's ideal, and for the wife and daughters together, whose affectionate sympathy

constantly sustaining, moved him now to tender expression, now to lofty resolve—for the wife and daughters, who made his domestic life one long sweet symphony—the world would have lost its greatest champion of the fireside, and the greatest prose-poet of our tongue; that the highest and best in the productions to which I refer would not have been uttered; and that many others, as entireties, would not now enrich our literature and our lives. Let us therefore thank the three women, who, hopeless of the laurel and the crown, so nobly did their part in sustaining and inspiring him who will be ardently praised and lovingly remembered till all language is barren and all hearts are dust.

Referring now more specifically to the query as to whether Ingersoll practised the philosophy which he taught, let us first view him as the center of his household. This, although it naturally varied in size, was always very large. Besides Ingersoll himself, it consisted of Mrs. Ingersoll, Miss Ingersoll, Mr. and Mrs. Walston H. Brown and their children (Eva Ingersoll and Robert G. Ingersoll), Mrs. Ingersoll's mother (Mrs. Benjamin Weld Parker), Mr. Clinton Pinckney Farrell, who sustained to Ingersoll the various relations of private secretary, traveling companion, publisher, etc., Mrs. Farrell (Mrs. Ingersoll's sister), their daughter (Eva Ingersoll), Miss Sue Sharkey, and others. To this number are to be added "a small army" of indi-

viduals in the several capacities of tutor, governess, servant, etc.

There is a saying, as trite as it too often is true, that no house is large enough for two families. Yet here was a house which held not two but four families, four generations, in perfect harmony and content. Nothing could have induced them to dwell apart.

In his home, out of hearing and sight of the world, Robert G. Ingersoll was absolutely true to his ideal,—to each and all of the domestic precepts and doctrines, which, publicly taught and professed by him, have been quoted in the preceding chapters. His honeymoon lasted till death. He sought to make his home a heaven, and he succeeded. There all the refining, ennobling, and inspiring influences of past and present,—of science, philosophy, sculpture, painting, poetry, and music,—blended with the artless, ineffable charm of a great personality to create for a fortunate few the fairest place of earth. There, at last, was a home where *Shakespeare* was the Bible, *Burns* the hymn-book, and their most devoted reader a mingling of both. There did the humanitarian, philosopher, and poet realize his fondest dream. There, at last, was the real republic, the ideal democracy—a realm where love was the only law—a realm from whose radiant center there fell upon all a spirit as benign, as halcyon, as joyful as June's most perfect day.

Ingersoll's devotion to home was absolute, it being manifested even to the extent of relieving his wife of the usual household responsibilities and cares. In this, he was as proficient, as resourceful, as much himself,—in short, as supreme,—as in the realms of intellect and art.

Those who are familiar with *About Farming in Illinois* will recall that he emphasizes the relation which cooking bears to civilization :—

"The inventor of a good soup did more for his race than the maker of any creed." (i 432)

Hence these directions for broiling beefsteak on a stove :—

"Shut the front damper—open the back one—then take off a griddle. There will then be a draft downwards through this opening. Put on your steak, using a wire broiler, and not a particle of smoke will touch it, for the reason that the smoke goes down. If you try to broil it with the front damper open, the smoke will rise. For broiling, coal, even soft coal, makes a better fire than wood." (i 432)

Surely a unique deliverance for the author of the many wondrous words quoted in preceding chapters! And yet he was speaking from practical experience.

Nor was his knowledge of cooking limited to this recipe : he was adept in the several branches of the culinary art. And when, during the early years of his married life, the household cook chanced to be absent, as on a Sunday afternoon, Ingersoll did not feel that he was measuring to his ideal of de-

votion unless he sacrificed the delights of the study or of the parlor, and entered into active operations in the kitchen. The success of these operations, it is said, was so well attested as markedly to diminish the reputation of the regular cook.

His relief of Mrs. Ingersoll from the usual annoyances incident to the management of servants was equally characteristic. If, for example, it happened that one of them had been careless or delinquent, she would be reproved with a kindness, a gentle irony, which, revealing to her, without the slightest offense, her shortcomings, would not only produce the desired effect, but would leave her with an added sense of gratitude to her genial employer. However, it was seldom necessary to resort to even this gentle procedure; for the employees of the Ingersoll household served with rare faithfulness. And at the time of his death, several negro men journeyed from Washington to Dobbs' Ferry, that they might look once more upon the face of him in whose employ, as servants, in years gone by, they had felt the warmth of genuine human kindness.

In all the evidence of Ingersoll's domestic devotion, nothing is more notable than that every possible hour was spent at home. Once there, he remained until unavoidably called away, when, if possible, he took with him one or all of his loved ones. If unaccompanied, he lost no opportunity for speedy return. He sometimes resorted to very

unique means of returning. For example, during the early years of his forensic career, he was frequently called from Peoria in connection with cases that required his daily attention for a considerable period. It often happened, that, by the time he concluded his legal labors for the day, the last train for Peoria had departed; and the distance involved would be too great to cover with the usual conveyance. He would thereupon telegraph to the railroad authorities for a "light" locomotive, and return in its cab to Peoria.

His relations with his children were invariably those of sweet and affectionate companionship. He was oak and sunshine to the violets beneath,—with no shadows, clouds, or rain. His private practice in this regard tallied exactly with his unique public advice. His method consisted in seeking and developing goodness,—not in condemning "badness,"—in the nature of the child. It was the method of sympathy. He would praise and reward, but he would not blame nor censure. He recognized that the child's actions have necessary causes in physical and mental states. Accordingly, if one of his little children was doing some mischievous act, he would divert its attention in some kindly way. He would not resort to the usual method of "Don't! Don't! Stop!—You mustn't do that!" etc., which, as we have seen, he so heartily disliked. He knew better than to plant, with "mustn't," the seeds of rebellion in the mind

of a child too young to reason. His children never heard him utter any of these words.

The reader of the preceding chapter will recall the following :—

"I intend so to treat my children, that they can come to my grave and truthfully say: 'He who sleeps here never gave us a moment of pain. From his lips, now dust, never came to us an unkind word.'"

That prophetic declaration could be absolutely fulfilled but for this circumstance: Ingersoll has no grave. His loved ones would not give back to nature his sacred form. But his children can stand by the urn that holds his ashes "and truthfully say" not only what I have just quoted, but this also: "We never heard our father utter an impatient word, nor a word that we now regret."

And even this touching, this unprecedented tribute, in conjunction with all of similar significance that has preceded it in this chapter, is wholly inadequate to convey a fitting impression of the ideal domestic relations here concerned. Doubtless, therefore, such impression could best be realized, not in further biographical description, but in the words of the incomparable husband and father himself. It could best be realized in those wondrous messages of affection, of adoration, which now and then, during a long period of years, passed from Ingersoll as an itinerant propagandist, to those who remained behind at 'the holy hearth of his home.' But to reproduce those messages,—to enter



## *DID HE PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED?*

by baring their golden threads, the sacred place of affection,—would involve a sacrilege the mere thought of which it were impossible to entertain. At the same time, to undertake the impression which I have mentioned, and to which it almost seems that the world is entitled, by way of ethical example, would be to commit, through sheer inadequacy, a sacrilege just as great! Perhaps a compromise on the middle ground of such meager extracts as will follow is a pardonable solution.

It has already been stated, that Ingersoll's relations with his children were invariably those of sweet and affectionate companionship. That this is but feebly descriptive of the relations mentioned, however, is evident in such letters as the one from which the following fragment is taken:—

"Words cannot express the feelings I have for you [Eva] and Maud and mother. You are the Trinity that I adore. All that I am capable of loving I love you. \* \* \* We will be together in a few days."

And:—

"When I think of mother and you and Maud in that house, it seems as though it would emit light in the darkest night."

In the spring of 1891, accompanied by his wife and his younger daughter, Maud, he was on the westward journey of his second trip of that year to Montana; but an extract from a letter, or prose-poem, rather, written at St. Paul, on May 16th, to

Eva and her husband, at Dobbs' Ferry-on-Hudson, shows, as characteristically and charmingly, perhaps, as could any similar extract, that, as usual, home and loved ones were not out of his thoughts, nor even his sight:—

"We talk about you both most of the time. I think of you as looking away across the shining river, at the shadowy and billowy hills, lost in the purple of distance—of you down in that garden, where every leaf is the promise of some joy, and where, it seems to me, that everything will be glad to grow *for you*—of you watching those cows standing beneath the apple-trees, the blossoms falling at their feet—and, above all, of you both loving each other."

And then, only four days later (having arrived at Butte), the invariable longing to return:—

"Another day nearer home. That is the first thought each morning. It will only be a few more, and then we will sit together at 'Walston' and watch for the cantaloupes to grow.<sup>1</sup> \* \* \* We will have a long summer together—many, many beautiful days."

On the 23d he writes, from Helena, happy that on the following morning "we are to turn our faces towards yours." Well on his way, another of those charming and inimitable prose-poems in the form of a letter is written at St. Paul, on the 26th:—

"Here we are in the 'East' again. \* \* \* We are in perfect health \* \* \* and feel that we are nearer home. St. Paul seems close to New York—nearer to Dobbs' Ferry. We had a beautiful journey from

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<sup>1</sup> Ingersoll once remarked, in elucidation of his necessitarian philosophy of blaming no one for doing "as he must": "I do not blame gourd for not being a cantaloupe, but I like cantaloupes." (viii 478)

## *DID HE PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED?*

Helena—no dust—the plains as green as paradise—everything lovely, and along the road the larks were singing. We talk about you both. We say: 'They are eating breakfast.' 'It is bedtime now at Dobbs' Ferry.' 'They are probably in the garden.' And so we go on gabbling about the ones we love above all others in the wide world; and when I lie down at night I can hear Eva say: 'Can you go to sleep?' 'Good night.' 'Do you feel well?'—Well, good night; and the voice sounds as though there were only love in the world. \* \* \*

And then—the arrival; but that, undescribed by Ingersoll himself, is better left, by him who would write, to the reverential fancy of him who reads.

"How happy I was when the girls were babes!" wrote Ingersoll to a nephew, on August 9, 1890. "Well, I am happy still. I am now reaping the harvest of my life. The house is filled with affection, and we are all really happy. I hope that you will be as joyous at 57 as I am now."

Another interesting indication that his happiness continued after his own babes, as such, were replaced by grandchildren is furnished by a "fragment" which was written on the first anniversary of Eva Ingersoll-Brown. The fragment also furnishes a glimpse of the playful, sunny spirit of its author in his home:—

"One year of perfect health—of countless smiles—of wonder and surprise—of growing thought and love—was duly celebrated on this day, and all paid tribute to the infant queen. There were whirling things that scattered music as they turned—and boxes filled with tunes—and curious animals of whittled wood—and ivory rings with tinkling bells—and little dishes for a fairy-feast—horses that rocked, and bleating sheep and monstrous elephants of painted tin. A baby-tender, for a tender babe, garments of silk and cushions wrought with

flowers, and pictures of her mother when a babe—and silver dishes for another year—and coach and four and train of cars—and bric-a-brac for a baby's house—and last of all, a pearl, to mark her first round year of life and love." (xii 353)

Quite as interesting, for the same reasons, is the following letter, written five years later:—

"THE ARLINGTON,

"HOT SPRINGS, ARK., Feb'y 16th, 1898.

"DEAR EVA AND ROBBIE:

"We received your sweet letter this morning, and we are glad to hear that you love us and want us to come home. We will see you in a few days and tell you where we have been and what we have seen. We have been over the prairies and bridges, and through the forests, and in the towns and cities. We have seen thousands of men, women, and children, and lots of babes; but we have seen no girl and boy as sweet as you. This is a beautiful day, and Grandma and I are going to take a walk. The sun is shining, and the sky is blue as Robbie's eyes and as bright as Eva's smile. We love you both and would like to hug and kiss you this morning. Kiss mamma and papa for us, and tell them to be good—as good as you are, and that will be good enough. I hope you had good dreams last night. Hope you have had the cow mended, and that all the dolls and animals are well—that no legs are broken. As soon as I get back I will eat some baked apples with you and give you both a lot of whipped cream. We will have gay times. Give our love to grandmother Parker, and to Eva Farrell and her mother, and to aunt Maud, and *Judy with her beautiful nose*, and to Annie.

"Well, good-bye. Love and kisses for you both. Your letter make us happy.

"We love you.

"GRANDMA AND GRANDPA."

The pecuniary features of Ingersoll's domestic philosophy were carried out in a very characteristic way. One of the drawers of a particular bureau served as a household bank, the contents of which

were replenished from time to time with odd amounts—greater or less, as circumstances might prompt. Without key or accountant, this unique monetary institution, with one depositor, was equally accessible to all. Wife and children were simply told by husband and father, that what was his was theirs. He did this that they might be free from the necessity of asking for money. He desired that their pecuniary liberty, so to speak, as well as their liberty in all other respects, should be absolute. At the same time, as regards his children, he preferred, for ethical reasons, that they should not have the actual handling of money—lest they might come to care for it in itself. Instead, therefore, of being put to the necessity of availing themselves of the very liberty which they so well knew was theirs, namely, the privileges of the “household bank,” they were accompanied to the “shops” and there told to select what they wished.

The ethical result of this method was the very one that their father had hoped to attain. The children, knowing that they were at liberty to draw upon the common fund at any time, rarely did so,—rarely had money in their personal possession,—and, consequently, never acquired the mental attitude which tends to make of money a fetich. Similarly with respect to the things that money could procure: knowing that they might have whatever they chose, they seldom asked for anything, and never for anything unreasonable.

In fact, they were very economical, it being their constant aim to avoid putting any unnecessary burden upon their noble and generous father. Their solicitude in this regard was also manifest in the care of things with which they or the household in common had already been provided. Here again, knowing that if they chanced to break or mar a doll or a dish or a piece of furniture no blame would attach, they were unusually careful; and when such an accident did occur, they felt it even to the keenest sorrow. All this could only have been due to the ideal relations which they enjoyed—to affection, justice, and freedom—to the restraint of liberty.

Very often, at the conclusion of lectures in which Ingersoll had set forth his doctrine of domestic finance, people would gather about him and say that they could never treat their children as he had taught.

"Why," some man would declare, "my children would rob me—bankrupt me!"

"That would be because you had not treated them rightly at the start," Ingersoll would reply in effect. "But take your children aside and have a good honest talk with them. Tell them that you are going to give them a little liberty, and that if they do not abuse it, it will continue."

Sometimes the advice given in the lectures themselves required no supplemental remarks. To mention a case in point: A United States senator

from one of the Pacific states had disowned his daughter in his will, because she married contrary to his wishes. He had not spoken to her for twenty years. It chanced that Ingersoll visited the senator's place of residence and delivered *The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child*. After hearing the latter, the aged senator went home and wrote to his daughter. He told her that he had just heard a lecture which had convinced him that he was "an old fool." He begged her forgiveness, and asked that she come to him. But he did not await her arrival: he took a carriage that night and drove to her home, a long distance, reaching his destination at some unseemly hour.

The ennobling effect of the lecture just mentioned has often been remarked. It has been said, for instance, that a man on his way home from hearing it would, if possible, purchase some gift or other for his family.

An intimate associate of Ingersoll has stated, that he himself was never able to sit with the audience during a delivery of the lecture, without being moved to tears, because he knew that its every word came straight from the orator's heart, and was lived during every moment of his life.

The wife of a certain prominent citizen of Illinois, although herself a Christian, would never permit a detractor of Ingersoll to go unrebuked in her presence, because the latter's influence upon her husband had been so elevating and ennobling.

The remaining space of this volume might be devoted to similar cases and incidents. But enough concerning this single phase of Ingersoll's character. For it is already evident, that the influence of his teachings and of his great personality, radiating beyond the ideal circle in which he dwelt, made for the domestic ideal in the remotest parts of the continent.

Hardly less notable than his devotion to his family was his devotion to his friends. His heart, his purse, his house, his great prestige, his most arduous intellectual endeavors, were freely theirs. Probably no other man ever had greater capacity for friendship. To know him was to be his friend forever.

Innumerable as were his misguided enemies, his personal friends were legion. And what a miscellaneous assembly they would have made! They represented nearly every race, every reputable vocation, every social stage. In official life, they ranged from president to messenger, from general to private, from admiral to landsman; in commerce, from the president of the great railway-system to the clerk; in literature, from the poet to the penny-a-liner. Inventors, jurists, physicians, painters, actors, musicians, were his friends; and all loved him with wondrous devotion. Each of them who survives can say, with *Mark Twain*: "His was a great and beautiful spirit; he was a man—all man, from his crown to his foot-soles. My reverence for



him was deep and genuine. I prized his affection for me, and returned it with usury."

Whether in Peoria, in Washington, or in New York, the home of Ingersoll was an attractive and ever-welcoming center. Indeed, few were his notable contemporaries who had not experienced the rare delights of an evening there. For it was not, like so many other luxurious homes, a rendezvous for the mentally commonplace. Its attractions were for individualities—for such as have, in all ages and lands, been accustomed to think and to act. They possessed little capacity for polite fatuities and the private affairs of others; and even had they inclined to the latter, they would have been wasting their precious hours. For their host entertained a most hearty dislike for social gossip. It was utterly beneath him. 'It is just as easy to be familiar with the history of Julius Cæsar,' he would say, in effect, 'as to be familiar with the affairs of your next-door neighbor.' Hence the topics of conversation were of the most substantial and engaging sort. They would have interested women like de Staël and George Eliot, and men like Voltaire, Goethe, Burns, Huxley, Emerson, and Lincoln. How much they interested men of lesser note is a matter of social history. Thus in Washington, of a Sunday evening (always the "at-home" evening of the Ingersolls), men of national and international reputation—prominent members of the House and of the Senate, members of the Cabinet, etc.—invariably formed

part of the circle of which the great orator was the magnetic center. During "presidential years," it was not unusual to find in the Ingersoll drawing room a half dozen prospective candidates for the presidency, absorbed in the discussion of current political questions.

Needless to state, that, in the Ingersoll domestic circle, there was not only the most generous material hospitality: there was genuine intellectual hospitality,—something which, alas, too rarely prevails in the home. A prominent intellectual man who was a frequent caller at the Great Agnostic's used to remark, that it was the only place where he felt free to express his real convictions on all matters whatsoever. He had found, at last, with true appreciation, a circle in which he not only could express his honest thoughts without offense to anyone else, but in which he must express them, if he would enjoy the highest respect of all its members.

If we consider the immensity of Ingersoll's personality, his encyclopedic knowledge, his charm of presence and conversation, we need not tax the fancy to conceive something of the delights of an evening at his fireside. There are individuals who would minify those delights, as far as Ingersoll's conversation is concerned, by charging that he was not a thinker. The truth is, that he was one of the profoundest of thinkers. There were few if any subjects of human interest on which he had not thought deeply, and on which he was not prepared

instantly to express an opinion, whether from the rostrum or from his seat by the hearth. In this he had schooled himself from youth. But it was his misfortune, that he was neither solemn in manner nor ambiguous in expression. If he had only been void of humor, and if his language could only have been misunderstood, he would have been universally regarded as profound. Perspicuity, especially if wedded to humor, has ever been the enemy of philosophic fame.

Despite the depth and the range of his original thought, he read the thoughts of others. It was said by Schopenhauer, that if one wished to become a fool, one should pick up a book at every spare moment. This advice evidently is not always to be relied on; for very rarely did Ingersoll pass a leisure hour without a book.

In this connection should be specially mentioned two features of his remarkable mentality. The first was the faculty of divining just where to extract "the pith and marrow" of the matter before him. Surprising as it would sound to his anti-theological critics, it is said by those who know best that there seemed to be some sort of good demon in attendance to guide him forthwith to the most interesting and profitable parts. He would read a page at a glance, and yet he never appeared to be in a hurry.

The other feature of mentality to which I have referred was memory. He never forgot what he read. Mr. Baldwin, editor of the *Peoria Star*, is

authority for the statement that Ingersoll once repeated from memory, without hesitation or error and with perfect elocutionary effect, upwards of thirty separate poems which he had read, on the same day, for the first time, in the train between Chicago and Peoria. Mr. Baldwin, unobserved by Ingersoll, held a copy of the poems during the recitation, which was instigated by a Mr. Breed, in a drug-store, in Peoria.

Considering the attributes here briefly indicated it is hardly surprising that Ingersoll's intimate friends declare, as their conviction, that 'if his private conversations could have been preserved, it would have been better to let the writings go.' 'I have been with him on a hundred political platforms," says Colonel Clark E. Carr.<sup>2</sup> "I have heard him many times in literary addresses, always thrilled and moved by such eloquence as could 'haunt the heart, rouse the passions, lull rampaging multitudes, scatter to dust the thrones of kings and effect more wonders than the grandest choir or the deftest pen,' and still it always seemed to me that Colonel Ingersoll was more sublime in conversation than anywhere else. As Macaulay says, the life of Dr. Johnson is the biography of his biographies. Splendid as this biography is, a

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<sup>1</sup> *Ingersoll the Man*, a pamphlet, by Clarence S. Brown, a life-long associate. P. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Address delivered before the survivors of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry, Studebaker Hall, Chicago, Aug. 6, 1899.

enchancing as are its pages, it has always seemed to me since I came to know Colonel Ingersoll well, that if some Boswell could have been his constant companion to jot down every day the incidents and what he said in every position and relation of life, he would be able to give to the world a volume more interesting than Boswell's *Life of Johnson*." On several occasions Ingersoll's stenographic secretaries, evidently sharing this opinion, endeavored to suit their action thereto, as far as preserving the conversation was concerned; but they were always prevented from doing so. His inherent modesty would promptly assert itself, as it invariably did in matters of personal biography, and he would say: "I can't allow that," "You will have to stop that." And so, for the most part, those wondrous words of philosophy, of wit and wisdom, of humor and pathos, were lost to the world, and will live but a few brief years in the minds of a fortunate few.

However, with many other words of like nature, addressed to friends through the medium of writing, it has happily been different, as the following letters show. They are typical of their author in the several moods disclosed.

ON RECEIVING A PRESENT OF A VEST.

"PEORIA, Oct. 21, 1863.

"J. W. Proctor, Esq.

"DEAR FRIEND: Day before yesterday Messrs. Mawhynter &

French, of this city, handed me an elegant vest, for which, as they informed me, I was indebted to you.

"I must say that I think you made a good investment, at least for me. I thank you for your kindness and hope that you may live long in the enjoyment of all the vestal virtues of life; that your vested rights may never be wrested from you, at least without legal investigation. I also hope that after your death you will not long be kept in the vestibule of the better world, but be allowed to enter heaven at once.

"In conclusion, I am in favor of prosecuting the war until not a vestige remains of the rebellion.

"Yours truly,

"R. G. INGERSOLL.

"Remember me to Dr. McDowell and family." <sup>1</sup>

DECLINING AN INVITATION TO THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY  
DINNER OF THE CLOVER CLUB, PHILADEL-  
PHIA, JANUARY 28, 1883 (TO COLONEL  
THOMAS DONALDSON).

"I regret that I cannot be 'in clover' with you on the 28th instant.

"A wonderful thing is clover! It means honey and cream,—that is to say, industry and contentment,—that is to say, the happy bees in perfumed fields, and at the cottage gate 'bos' the bountiful serenely chewing satisfaction's cud, in that blessed twilight pause that like a benediction falls between all toil and sleep.

"This clover makes me dream of happy hours; of childhood's rosy cheeks; of dimpled babes; of wholesome, loving wives; of honest men; of springs and brooks and violets and all there is of stainless joy in peaceful human life.

"A wonderful word is 'clover'! Drop the 'c.' and you have the

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Proctor, then a resident of Lewistown, Fulton County, Ill., had prevailed upon Ingersoll to visit Lewistown and deliver a speech to counteract the anti-war sentiment which was rife in Fulton County, and had endeavored to induce the speaker to accept compensation for his services. Failing in the latter, Mr. Proctor went to Ingersoll's tailors, in Peoria, and ordered the vest as a surprise. Dr. McDowell was Ingersoll's host at Lewistown.

## DID HE PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED?

piest of mankind. Drop the 'r,' and 'c,' and you have left the only thing that makes a heaven of this dull and barren earth. Drop the 'r,' and there remains a warm, deceitful bud that sweetens breath and keeps the peace in countless homes whose masters frequent clubs. After all, Bottom was right :

" 'Good hay, sweet hay, hath no fellow.'

" Yours sincerely and regretfully.

" R. G. INGERSOLL.

" WASHINGTON, D. C., January 16, 1883."

### ON RECEIVING A PRESENT OF OPALS.

" November 26, 1885.

MY DEAR MR. JOHNSTON :

" A thousand thanks for your beautiful gift. Had I dreamed of your doing any such thing, I should never have spoken of the jewels. Now I can only express my surprise, my thanks, and ask you and Mrs. Johnston to come and see them and us.

" Diamonds are cold as intellect ; rubies, warm and selfish as desire ; but the ominous opal, with its imprisoned fire, is a combination of head and heart—of brain and blood—a mingling of purity and passion—virtue glorified by love.

" Thanking you again and again, and again, saying Come and see us,

" I remain,

" Yours always,

" R. G. INGERSOLL.

" *J. H. Johnston, Esq.*"

### ACKNOWLEDGING A GIFT OF CIGARS.

" 117 EAST 21ST STREET,

" GRAMERCY PARK, April 14, 1899.

MY DEAR MAJOR SMITH :

" To-day I opened a box of cigars and found your letter. I read it and said : ' He certainly was good to me.' I am smoking one now, and there starts over me a sense of gratitude—a feeling that I have a friend—that I am not forgotten. Let them say what they will, there

is in tobacco the essence, the aroma of friendship. The 'pipe of peace' is not a savage fancy—it is a civilized and scientific fact. Tobacco is social. It is a medium of mental exchange. The doctors may say that it shortens life—but the longer life is without it, the *worse it is*. The preachers say that to use it is wicked. The reason, and the only one they have, for saying this is that it gives us joy. For my own part, I had rather smoke one cigar than to hear two sermons. In fact I had rather chew 'green twist' than to read the best chapter in Leviticus.

"But whether smoke shortens life or not, whether it puts my soul in peril or not, I send you a thousand thanks for sending me a box of temptations—from which my sincere prayer is *not* to be delivered. I will smoke and think of you.

"Yours always,

"R. G. INGERSOLL."

PRESENTING A COPY OF LES MISÉRABLES.

"NEW YORK, Dec. 30, 1885.

"DEAR PALMER:

"I send you the greatest novel in the world—a novel filled with philosophy, beauty, pathos—with all that is tender, heroic, and dramatic. You will find all the lights and shadows that fall upon the heart—all the buds and blossoms, and all the withered leaves, that belong to Hope and Memory.

"This novel goes over the whole field of human experience—war, religion, politics, love, government, crime, punishment, education, history, and prophecy. It is filled with the divine—that is to say, with pity, with love. The good bishop, the sublime convict, the pure 'sister' Simplice, the purer Fantine—all these contradictions, are higher forms of truth.

"No man can read this book without becoming much better or much worse. This great light will either illumine the soul, or deepen the shadow.

"You will read it with wonder and tears.

"You will finish it with a sigh.

"R. G. INGERSOLL."

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<sup>1</sup> From *The Truth Seeker*, July 24, 1909.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.







## *DID HE PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED?*

TO THE SISTER OF MRS. JOHN C. INGERSOLL, ON THE  
DEATH OF HER AGED FATHER.

"January 6th, '89.

MY DEAR MAMIE:

"I know how pathetic death is, and how sudden it always seems, and how lonely and dark the whole world grows. I know that you have had anxious days, and nights filled with terror. You needed company. It was an awful experience to wait for the coming of death. Well, it is all over, and the peace of the infinite has fallen on another of the sons of men. It is not an occasion for sorrow. He had lived his life—the spring, the summer, the autumn, and the last days of winter. For him there could not be another spring. The drama was done, and the curtain fell; and yet I know that death fills all with sorrow. I hope, my dear girl, that the sunlight will fall upon your heart again. Give my love to your mother, and believe me, as ever,

"Your affectionate uncle,

"ROBERT."

TO MR. JOHN G. MILLS, ON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER.

"WASHINGTON, D. C., May 12, 1881.

MY DEAR MR. MILLS:

"I know how poor, weak, and worthless all words are, and forever must be, in the presence of death. I know from experience that human sympathy is 'balm for hurt minds,' and I want you to know that you have mine. After all, there is only the difference of a few beats of the heart between the living and the dead. A little more anxiety, a few more moments of gladness, a few more tears, and the universal fate will be ours. I know what it is to see a father dead, and I now feel that I would like to press your hand.

"Yours always,

"R. G. INGERSOLL." <sup>1</sup>

In dealing with strangers, as in intercourse with friends, Ingersoll ever manifested the most admir-

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<sup>1</sup> Courtesy of Joseph Ambrose Thompson, M. D., Hyattsville, Md.

able traits. Whether in contact with high public officials, or with employes of railroads and hotels, or with members of the press, his manner and conversation were above criticism. Invariably courteous and considerate,—generous at every opportunity for being so,—he frequently acted the role of friend.

Consider his relations with newspaper men. Aside from the probability that he created for them more work than any other individual publicist, he was, in his personal dealings, one of the very best friends, if not the best friend, that the reporters have ever had. He was the most approachable of men. And not only did he make the interview socially pleasurable, he made it a practical success, for the reporter. He possessed the sense of "news"—knew just what was wanted, and gave it. This is interestingly evidenced by the fact that his permanently published interviews alone, extracted from the press of the United States, Canada, and England, occupy more than seven hundred octavo pages, and deal with almost every subject of human concern. He was interviewed on even "the interviewer." It is said by the reporters themselves, that Ingersoll was never known to decline an interview, and that many men who hold high positions in journalism achieved their first professional success at his hands. Precisely the same could be stated with reference to members of other profes-

ions who, as strangers, sought his wise and kindly counsel.

One of the best proofs of moral greatness and mental largeness is absence of caste and of racial, religious, and political prejudice. Ingersoll had none of these—was not prejudiced against the individual. Take the two worst forms of prejudice,—racial and religious. With reference to the latter, he said:—

“Understand me. I hate Methodism, and yet I know hundreds of splendid Methodists. I hate Catholicism, and like Catholics. I hate insanity but not the insane.” (i 463)

He was as generous with the orthodox Catholic, as an individual, as he was with the dogmatic theist. As to racial prejudice: he would have treated a negro evangelist with as much consideration as he would Professor Huxley, if not more; for the former would have excited his pity. He was graciously afflicted with the colorblindness of true democracy. Like so many other members of the negro race, the late Frederick Douglass has furnished most interesting evidence of this. On page 560 of his *Life and Times*, he says:—

“A dozen years ago, or more [1868 or earlier], on one of the frostiest and coldest nights I ever experienced, I delivered a lecture in the town of Elmwood, Illinois, twenty miles distant from Peoria. It was one of those bleak and flinty nights, when prairie winds pierce like needles, and a step on the snow sounds like a file on the steel teeth of a saw. My next appointment after Elmwood was on Monday night, and in order to reach it in time, it was necessary to go to Peoria

the night previous, so as to take an early morning train, and I could only accomplish this by leaving Elmwood after my lecture at midnight, for there was no Sunday train. So a little before the hour at which my train was expected at Elmwood, I started for the station with my friend Mr. Brown, the gentleman who had kindly entertained me during my stay. On the way I said to him, 'I am going to Peoria with something like a real dread of the place. I expect to be compelled to walk the streets of that city all night to keep from freezing.' I told him that 'the last time I was there I could obtain no shelter at any hotel and I fear I shall meet a similar exclusion to-night.' Mr. Brown was visibly affected by the statement and for some time was silent. At last, as if discovering a way out of a painful situation, he said, 'I know a man in Peoria, should the hotels be closed against you there, who would gladly open his doors to you—a man who will receive you at any hour of the night, and in any weather, and that man is Robert G. Ingersoll.' 'Why,' said I, 'it would not do to disturb a family at such a time as I shall arrive there, on a night so cold as this.' 'No matter about the hour,' he said; 'neither he nor his family would be happy if they thought you were shelterless on such a night. I know Mr. Ingersoll, and that he will be glad to welcome you at midnight or at cock-crow.' I became much interested by this description of Mr. Ingersoll. Fortunately I had no occasion for disturbing him or his family. I found quarters for the night at the best hotel in the city. In the morning I resolved to know more of this now famous and noted 'infidel.' I gave him an early call, for I was not so abundant in cash as to refuse hospitality in a strange city when on a mission of 'good will to men.' The experiment worked admirably. Mr. Ingersoll was at home, and if I have ever met a man with real living human sunshine in his face, and honest, manly kindness in his voice, I met one who possessed these qualities that morning. I received a welcome from Mr. Ingersoll and his family which would have been a cordial to the bruised heart of any proscribed and storm-beaten stranger, and one which I can never forget or fail to appreciate. Perhaps there were Christian ministers and Christian families in Peoria at that time by whom I might have been received in the same gracious manner. In charity I am bound to say there probably were such ministers and such families, but I am equally bound to say that in my former visits to this place I had failed to find them."

Besides this appreciative expression, Mr. Doug-

It is said to have stated, that, of all the great men of his personal acquaintance, there had been only two in whose presence he could be without feeling that he was regarded as inferior to them—Abraham Lincoln and Robert G. Ingersoll.

On the day of the latter's death, a negro waiter at the Cadillac Hotel, Detroit, having indicated to one of the guests, by word and manner, that he (the waiter) was feeling "powerful bad," the following colloquy took place:—

"I've lost a good friend to-day. Oh! a very good friend," explained the waiter.

"Indeed," said the guest. "Who was it?"

"Colonel Ingersoll, sir; Colonel Ingersoll."

"Was he your friend?"

"He was, indeed, sir; he was my friend, one of the best of them, sir. He always used me as a gentleman, Colonel Ingersoll did. He never knew whether my skin was black or white."

The last sentence could be truthfully uttered by every other colored man with whom Ingersoll came in contact. Whether in private, or in the rostrum, or on the field of battle, the negro never had a better friend.

In the bestowal of charity, Ingersoll was quite careless of race, color, and creed as in the bestowal of friendship. His beneficence compassed

This is so widely known, despite the modesty with which he exercised, and so many incidental references to it were made in previous chapters, that, to

answer here in the affirmative the query as to whether he practised the charity which he advocated, seems all but needless. One would think that his benevolence, inseparably blended as it is with the most cherished memories of him, would live even if left wholly to tradition. Certain it is, that the declaration of *Hamlet* has proven false for once :—

“ \* \* \* there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year ; but by'r lady, he must build churches then \* \* \* .”

Still, it may not be well to place implicit confidence in tradition.

It is peculiarly interesting, that the Great Agnostic's sentiments on the unfortunate had been perfectly expressed for him in a prayer—“the best” that he “ever read”—the prayer of *Lear* upon the heath :—

“ Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your unhoused heads, your unfed sides,  
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you  
From seasons such as these ? Oh, I have ta'en  
Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp ;  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,  
And show the heavens more just.”

Yet, notwithstanding his admiration for this marvellous deliverance, he himself declared :—

“ The hands that help are better far  
Than lips that pray.”



## *DID HE PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED?*

He used to say that he did not understand how one could live in possession of great wealth where thousands were starving, any more than one could keep a pile of lumber on the beach and watch thousands drown in the sea. And he acted in perfect accord with these sentiments. A gentleman who was intimately acquainted with Ingersoll's private affairs remarked to the author, while Ingersoll was yet living: "The world will never know the extent of 'the Colonel's' benefactions. He will not permit it to be known while he lives; and after he is dead, no one will be able to believe the truth about it, even if divulged by his family."

The sufferings of the poor and wretched filled his heart with anguish. It was an unwritten law, that no one should go hungry from his door. It was morally certain, that he never turned a deaf ear to poverty. It is just as certain, that he was constantly imposed upon. Some of his friends, feeling sure of this, used to advise him to mingle more judgment with his charity. To such he replied: "The trouble with most people is, that they mingle too much 'judgment' with their charity that it is nearly all 'judgment.'" And so his responses to the countless appeals that reached him in various ways, from all sides, were practically indiscriminate. He said that he should rather be deceived a dozen times, than that one poor soul should suffer through mistaken suspicion.

Though Ingersoll gave his dollars by hundreds

and thousands, it was not the size of his individual gifts that proved most clearly his beneficent qualities: it was the number and the spirit of those gifts—the countless acts which he performed, in private, with the understanding that they were not to become generally known, and which, in fact, did become known to only a few.

As has so often been observed by his detractors, he founded no college or asylum. He was too busy with the individual. He never experienced, nor cared to experience, the haughty, egotistic satisfaction of one who sees his own name chiseled amid the cold embellishments of architecture; but a thousand times he heard the words, or saw the tears, of those who, in need, felt the warmth of his heart. To assist the ragged, hungry, and despairing wretch of the street; to make a substantial gift to some man or woman grown prematurely old with menial toil; to relieve the necessities of some poor girl, some clerk or student; to care for the mother and child that death has left with naught but tears; to sympathize with the failures,—the victims,—of nature; to uplift the fallen; to pity even the criminal and despised—to do all these, as did Ingersoll, is to demonstrate, not merely “philanthropy,” but the possession of as tender and noble a heart as ever throbbed in human breast.

Even should we decline to ascribe to Ingersoll higher attributes than are ordinarily implied by “philanthropic,” we should still be bound to in-

## *DID HE PRACTISE WHAT HE PREACHED?*

quire, in simple fairness, whether he could well have been more so. For a score of years, his annual income ranged from fifty thousand to one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. He did not dissipate nor gamble, and yet did not own a foot of earth, nor even the house in which he died; and his personal property did not exceed in value ten thousand dollars. He had often made that much in a day or two. With the income of a prince, he lived in comparative poverty. What had become of his money? Such of it as had not been lavished on his loved ones had been given to others. If we apply the term "philanthropist" to one who gives part of his possessions, expecting, in return, honor in this world, and a reward in another, what term shall we apply to him who gave all, expecting neither of these?

In this connection, both justice and accuracy require a word of comment upon the assertion, frequently made, that Ingersoll cared nothing for money. It implies, of course, that his monetary generosity was not generosity at all. Now, it is true that he did not care for money for money's sake; that he did not make a fetish of money. He did not care for a dollar, nor, appreciably, for a thousand dollars; but he cared for a million dollars—not for what it is in itself, but for the comforts and luxuries which it brings. And no one had the capacity to enjoy them more than he. In this sense, he cared a great deal for money.

In considering his ministrations to the unfortunate, it would be impossible to give due credit to his personality without mentioning a remarkable faculty to which as yet I have not alluded. I refer to his influence over the insane.

For instance, during his early legal practice, in Illinois, an old coal-miner, surnamed Thomas, was visited at his ('Thomas') house by three men, now supposed to have been strikers, a strike then being in progress. The old man, fearing that they had come to take his life, fired from a window and killed one of them. In a trial for murder, Ingersoll defended Thomas, who was acquitted. But he shortly became insane—from remorse, it was said. At times he was quite rational; at others, violent. Aware of the calmative influence exerted upon him by the personality of Ingersoll, he soon came to regard the latter as his protector. And so, at the approach of a mental attack, he would leave his home, on the Kickapoo, and, accompanied by his scraggy old dog, go straight to Ingersoll's house, in Peoria. He would follow the latter to his office, and remain till Ingersoll went home; then he would sit all night on the veranda—always perfectly contented so long as he was near to Ingersoll, but wild with fear if they became separated by any considerable distance. In a few days, the mental storm having subsided, he and his faithful old dog would trudge back to the Kickapoo,—to return again in a few months, perhaps, perhaps not for a year.

Ingersoll was once riding in a train, near Worcester, Mass., he being seated alone, when a strange man who had been eyeing him intently for some time, approached and asked permission to sit with him. "You look so restful," he said to Ingersoll, by way of excuse. Presently he commenced to pour his confidences into Ingersoll's ears, stating, among other things, that he had just escaped from an asylum, to which he was sent because the doctrine of hell-fire, taught him by his mother, made him insane. Remarkable coincidence—a victim of the idea of infinite revenge appealing to its arch enemy for comfort and protection! Strange confirmation of the Great Agnostic's assertion, that one who really believes in everlasting punishment will go insane!

Believing that the mentally unbalanced, like others, are amenable to kindness, Ingersoll, as a rule, did not unnecessarily question their vagaries or delusions. On at least one occasion, however, his method was humorously different from this. He was again riding in a train, when a strange man suddenly came to his seat and asked:

"Do you know God?"

Instantly recognizing that his questioner was insane, Ingersoll replied,—with face as solemn as a tombstone: "No: I don't know God, but I know Mrs. God."

The lunatic's countenance, as he momentarily stared at Ingersoll, assumed, it is said, a look which unmistakably indicated that in its owner's opinion

he was not the only crazy man in that car! Completely nonplussed, he straightway took his seat, preserving unbroken silence as long as the two occupied the same car.

These are but a few of the many instances which might be cited to show that Ingersoll possessed—and, too, quite in addition to his tact and wit—an unusual power over the unfortunate individuals concerned. It was doubtless simply a particular manifestation of that general feeling of trust and confidence which he inspired, in greater or less degree, in all with whom he came in contact.

His treatment of those misguided persons who assumed toward him the rôle of enemy affords ample proof of his mental largeness and magnanimity. Bitterly as he was hated by some, he never hated in return. In his great heart there was no room for malice. "It is of no use to raise snakes in your bosom—you have to sleep with them," he would say. And so he never indulged in a pectoral menagerie of any kind. Of course he did not claim to love his enemies, because he knew that it was impossible for him to love them; and he believed it to be quite as impossible for others to love theirs. He did not believe in miracles, either physical or emotional; but he did believe in the "reciprocity" of Confucius. Like that great sage and moralist, his practice was:—

"For benefits return benefits; for injuries return justice, without admixture of revenge."

A series of incidents that occurred in Illinois will serve to illustrate not only his practice of this rule of ethics, but the way in which he was so often misunderstood.

A minister, during a call at Ingersoll's home, began to indulge in the usual clerical animadversions on Voltaire, for whom Ingersoll, as we have learned, entertained inordinate admiration and love. The latter asked his reverend guest whether he had read the immortal Frenchman. The minister replied, that he had read everything that Voltaire wrote. Ingersoll doubted this, but said nothing to indicate his doubt. The conversation continued for a few minutes, when he went to his library, and, returning with a book, read aloud a favorite selection. The minister expressed great admiration for it, and inquired the name of its author. In silence, Ingersoll handed his visitor the volume: it was *Voltaire*! In the breast of this Protestant clergyman of the prairies,—rendered vulnerable by pretence,—Ingersoll, in silence, had pierced as sharp a wound as Voltaire himself was wont to inflict with words in the breasts of the Catholic prelates of Europe.

The clergyman straightway took his departure, and subsequently preached a series of sermons that were both critical and abusive of the Great Agnostic. But the latter was as silent as when he handed the book to their prospective author.

A few years later, the minister made it his privi-

lege to attend (in some town not far from Peoria) a political meeting at which Ingersoll spoke. After the meeting, the minister made it his further privilege to occupy a seat in the conveyance by which the speaker returned to his hotel. Upon reaching the latter, the clergyman asked to see Ingersoll in private. His request granted, he explained that he had grown somewhat, intellectually, since the incident concerning Voltaire; that he understood Ingersoll better, and wished to be forgiven for having preached the abusive sermons. He was generously absolved from the sin.<sup>1</sup>

This one sample of the immense totality of evidence, that Ingersoll lived, in private, to his publicly professed ideal of the treatment of one's enemies, must here suffice. It is obviously impracticable to do more than to indicate the conduct that was characteristic of him in this regard.

The same is true concerning his practice of all the other ideals and precepts of his philosophy. Hence, the aim of this chapter has been, not a catalogue of acts, but a characterization.

If the latter has been even partially realized, it has brought us to the unmistakable and unavoidable conclusion: That Ingersoll did "practise what he preached"; that he was a perfect husband and father, a faithful, generous friend, a kind

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<sup>1</sup>Contrary to general understanding, this incident of visitor and *Voltaire*, here correctly narrated, has absolutely no connection with Ingersoll's candidacy for the governorship of Illinois.



employer; that he was invariably courteous to strangers; that he was a true philanthropist,—loving his fellow-men regardless of race, or color, or creed,—doing his utmost for the poor and wretched, and pitying even the criminal and despised; that he was just to his enemies—in short, that he was supreme in every relation of life; and that, as we accepted Ingersoll's philosophy after considering its precepts and doctrines, so now, having considered Ingersoll's conduct, we must accept Ingersoll the philosopher—Ingersoll the man.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *HIS FACULTIES OF ARTISTIC AND INTELLECTUAL EXPRESSION*

**H**E WHO would rise to the full scope of Ingersoll's art, in its varied manifestations—oratory, poetry, prose—must be familiar with the elements of things. He must be of no school or cult—must possess that elemental depth, that aversion to the provincial, that view of the universal, which invariably marks the mind of genius. In unison with the great eternal pulse of the universe must be the rhythm of his heart and brain.

But how are we to look upon the artistic side of Ingersoll? Shall he be viewed as an orator, as a poet, or as a rhetorician? I answer: As none of these, in particular; for he was far more than any or all of them: he was an idealist,—one of the purest and sublimest that has lived. Back of every expression,—poetic, oratorical, or philosophical,—was the ideal. This he worshiped. In the realm of art, he saw with faultless eye. So absolute was his devotion to the ideal; so keen, and yet so profound, his sense of symmetry, pro-

portion, harmony, that he clothed his thoughts in the noblest garb, shrinking from the inapposite, the inelegant, as surely as the magnet repels a scrap of lead. This made his art supreme.

It is often remarked: "That man was a great sculptor," "That man was a great painter," when it should be said: "A great idealist chiseled that statue," "A great idealist painted that picture." Who can not chisel or paint? But how many who chisel or paint or write or speak do so at the command of the ideal?

Every writer and every speaker unconsciously produces a perfect likeness of his physical and mental being—of himself. It is called his style. Critics sometimes assert that the style of so-and-so is "artificial." In the ultimate sense, this is erroneous. Should a writer employ a borrowed style, it would not be his style, any more than an apple artificially attached to a twig of an orange-tree would be an orange. And no matter how successful he might be in deceiving others as to the genuineness of his style, he could never succeed in deceiving himself.

We are here led to a most fitting comparison of two natural phenomena: the tree and its fruit—the author and his style. The analogy is unmistakable. Neither literally nor figuratively do men gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles. No one would have expected Daniel Webster—the Brobdingnagian frame, the leonine head with brow

overhanging cliff like the cavernous eyes and rugged lines below—to produce a *Queen Mab*. It required the slight figure, the girlish, sympathetic face, the intense blue eyes, the keen sensibilities, the rare ethereal vision, of Shelley.

Ingersoll, too, put his personality into his lines. His style, therefore, is not susceptible to comparison—it is utterly unique! Should one of his marvelous pages be found on the sands of the Sahara, its author would be instantly recognizable.

A vast majority of our race are substantially alike. They look alike, dress alike, act alike, think alike. Since they must inevitably, if unconsciously, infuse into their literary expression a part of their very selves, how can they but write alike? Indeed, not only is the latter what we are led, by reason and analogy, to expect: it is precisely what we establish by observation. Take the output in any branch of literature—contemporary periodical verse, for example. As far as individuality is concerned, the greater part of the periodical verse of the last decade, or of the preceding, could have been written by a single person. Between the styles (if “styles” there be) of almost any two of the scores of authors actually represented, there is less difference than between the styles of the garments of any two of those authors, despite the proverbial pecuniary vicissitudes of literary fortune. Ingersoll himself described, all too faithfully, this class of artists when he said:—

## *HIS FACULTIES OF EXPRESSION*

" \* \* \* Most writers suppress individuality. They wish to please the public. They flatter the stupid and pander to the prejudice of their readers. They write for the market, making books as other mechanics make shoes. They have no message, they bear no torch, they are simply the slaves of customers.

"The books they manufacture are handled by 'the trade'; they are regarded as harmless. The pulpit does not object; the young person can read the monotonous pages without a blush—or a thought.

"On the title pages of these books you will find the imprint of the great publishers; on the rest of the pages, nothing. These books might be prescribed for insomnia." (iii 260)

In striking contrast with the many writers just described stand the few who are the glory of literature not only, but of the human race,—the men and the women of genius. And, strange to say, or rather, natural to say, the former have always made, and are still making, with perhaps equal frequency, in reference to the latter, two contradictory assertions. About half of the mediocrities assert, that individuals of genius are the same as others; and this is perfectly natural, because mediocrity can scarcely be expected fully to comprehend its own limitations. A prisoner can see only the inner side of the confining wall—never the outer side nor the top. The other half of the mediocrities assert, that individuals of genius are absolutely different from others; and this, too, is perfectly natural, for the same reason. The truth is, that the genius is the same as others in everything except that in which he is a genius; or, reversely, he differs from others in that only in which he is not a mediocrity.

Without speculating as to the ultimate cause of the difference distinguishing him (the futility of so speculating, in the present state of scientific knowledge, having been pointed in Chapter I), we may yet briefly concern ourselves with the difference itself. The genius, then, has implicit confidence in himself; the mediocrity, confidence in others. The genius has learned little, and has little to learn: the mediocrity may have learned a great deal, but has a great deal to learn. The genius does not "suppress individuality": he expresses it. He does not "wish to please the public," but himself,—his ideal. He does not "flatter the stupid": he tries to arouse and enlighten them. He does not "pander to the prejudice" of his readers: he tries to destroy it. He does not "write for the market," but for posterity. He has a "message"; he bears a "torch"; he is not a "slave," but free. His books, though they may be "handled by 'the trade,'" are not always "regarded as harmless": they are often regarded as dangerous. To them, "the pulpit" does "object"; because, while "the young person" can read them "without a blush," neither the young nor the old can read them without "a thought."

So it was with Ingersoll and his works. And no one else in American literature, where the microcephalous deny him a place, has crowded more into a line. Many have occupied pages in expressing what he would have expressed in a paragraph.

He wrote as a river runs. In the work of no other writer is to be found less evidence of effort. There is nothing to suggest the literary student,—the “verbal varnisher and veneerer.” Preëminently the word-wizard of his century, the whole of rhetoric was rejuvenated by his genius.

But there is a particular quality of his style, which, although not yet recognized by the general reader, demands conspicuous attention,—and, indeed, perhaps the most conspicuous attention,—in a just estimate of him as a literary artist. I refer to rhythm. For it is undoubtedly true, as an observing and distinguished critic has said, that *Ingersoll*, like *Isocrates*, was the first to perfect the prose rhythms of the language in which he sought expression. He possessed not only the imagination, but the ear, of the born poet. Believing that the poets themselves have demonstrated rhyme to be a hindrance, rather than a help, in expressing the sublimest thought and feeling; caring nothing for the greater part of that which passes as poetry; and often putting upon it the stamp of ridicule, he carried unconsciously into his lines the enchanting splendor,—the resistless charm,—of metered rhyme. It is this, more than any other single factor, which will one day compel impartial and unprejudiced critics to place him among the first, if not at the head, of the great masters of English prose.

So naturally did his thoughts find harmonious expression, that scarcely a page of his finer produc-

tions fails to afford, here and there, material for exquisite blank verse.

Thus "The Warp and Woof," only part of which (for spacial reasons) will be quoted, may be arranged so that the prevailing measure will be iambic pentameter:—

"The rise and set of sun,  
The birth and death of day,  
The dawns of silver and the dusks of gold,  
The wonders of the rain and snow,  
The shroud of winter and the many-colored robes of spring,  
The lonely moon with nightly loss or gain,  
The serpent lightning and the thunder's voice,  
The tempest's fury and the breath of morn,  
The threat of storm and promise of the bow;  
Cathedral clouds with dome and spire," etc.

*(Prose-Poems and Selections, p. 63)*

And elsewhere, in iambic rhythm, rendered more conspicuous by prosodical division and capitalization, this charming picture of autumn:—

"The withered banners of the corn are still,  
And gathered fields are growing strangely wan,  
While death, poetic death,  
With hands that color what they touch,  
Weaves in the autumn wood  
Its tapestries of brown and gold."

*(Prose-Poems and Selections, p. 265)*

Speaking of the part that myths have played in the evolution of religious thought, he says, in perfect iambic rhythm:—



## HIS FACULTIES OF EXPRESSION

"They thrilled the veins of Spring with tremulous desire;  
Made tawny Summer's billowed breast the throne and home of love;  
Filled Autumn's arms with sun-kissed grapes and gathered sheaves;  
And pictured Winter as a weak old king  
Who felt, like Lear upon his withered face, Cordelia's tears." (ii x)

The following rhapsodical tribute to Shelley is so strikingly like what Poe defined as "*The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty*," that, had it been written with ten syllables to the line, no more and no less, as it could have been, regardless alike of sense and rhythm, it would doubtless be called poetry:—

"The light of morn beyond the purple hills—  
A palm that lifts its coronet of leaves above the desert's sands—  
An isle of green in some far sea—  
A spring that waits for lips of thirst—  
A strain of music heard within some palace wrought of dreams—  
A cloud of gold above a setting sun—  
A fragrance wafted from some unseen shore." (xii 354)

Concerning Shakespeare's understanding of human nature, he expresses himself with a rhythm as wondrously beautiful as the molten undulations left by the sinking sun:—

"He knew the thrills and ecstasies of love,  
The savage joys of hatred and revenge.  
He heard the hiss of envy's snakes  
And watched the eagles of ambition soar.  
There was no hope that did not put its star above his head—  
No fear he had not felt—  
No joy that had not shed its sunshine on his face." (iii 21)

Again of Shakespeare:—

"He walked the ways of mighty Rome,  
And saw great Caesar with his legions in the field.  
He stood with vast and motley throngs  
And watched the triumphs given to victorious men,  
Followed by uncrowned kings, the captured hosts, and all  
the spoils of ruthless war.  
He heard the shout that shook the Coliseum's roofless walls,  
When from the reeling gladiator's hand the short sword fell,  
While from his bosom gushed the stream of wasted life." (iii 71)

It will be observed, that, excepting a single line in the last, both of these Shakespearian quotations like the one on Shelley, could be arranged in perfectly regular blank verse, with five iambic feet (ten syllables) to the line. It will also be observed, that, should they be so arranged, the sense would be marred, and they would lose in souciance and rhythmic beauty. What would be left? And yet, had they been originally written thus, by some professional poet schooled to sacrifice substance to mere traditional literary form they would have been classed as poetry. Indeed that this is precisely what would have occurred even had they possessed less of poetic quality than they do, there is ample evidence. As introductory of a fragment of it, I quote:—

"The red man came—the roaming hunter tribes, warlike and fierce  
and the mound-builders vanished from the earth. The solitude  
centuries untold has settled where they dwelt. The prairie w  
hunts in their meadows, and his fresh-dug den yawns by my pa  
The gopher mines the ground where stood their swarming cities."

Surely the average reader, chancing upon the

passage, would not suspect that he was being enriched beyond the potencies of good prose: and yet, no less a judge of literature than William Cullen Bryant evidently regarded it as poetry; for he wrote and published it as such, in blank verse of just ten syllables, under the title *The Prairies*, as follows:—

“The red man came—

The roaming hunter tribes, warlike and fierce,  
And the mound-builders vanished from the earth,  
The solitude of centuries untold  
Has settled where they dwelt. The prairie wolf  
Hunts in their meadows, and his fresh-dug den  
Yawns by my path. The gopher mines the ground  
Where stood their swarming cities.”

But let it be understood, that this passage is not quoted with the object of asserting that it is not poetry, nor with the purposive implication that the scores of productions in like form which might be quoted from other sources are not poetry. Rather is it quoted with the object of rendering the reader receptive to a question which I have had in mind for many years, and which I now ask, in simple justice: If that which, when transformed into prose, is indistinguishable from it may be retransformed into verse and legitimately called poetry, what term shall be applied to that which, although originally written as prose, contains imaginative, emotional, rhythmic, and tonal qualities unmistakably placing it above and beyond good prose?

That is to ask, if the quotation from Bryant is poetry, what are the quotations from Ingersoll? If Bryant and others of his school were poets, what was Ingersoll? Let us be candid; let us be fair; let us be sensible.

Form is one thing; substance, or quality, quite another. Form is not an alembic transmuting the baser mental metals into gold. It does not create—it is created. It cannot change prose to poetry nor poetry to prose. Volumes of prose have been written as poetry; volumes of poetry, as prose.

The truth is, that, of all the elements of recognized poetic form, only one is absolutely indispensable to poetry—rhythm. There may be very great poetry without rhyme, and without perfect meter; but poetry without rhythm is not poetry—it is mere verse. It is a heart that does not beat—a stream without cataracts—a willow that does not wave—a bird without wings—a star that does not shine.

This indispensable element of poetry,—this indefinable something that haunts with enchanting spell the golden temple of enraptured song,—is apparent in all of Ingersoll's finer work. Of course, it is rendered more so by the formal treatment which I have applied to particular selections; but, unlike that of a considerable portion of the professional poet's blank verse, it cannot be obscured by the prose form, in which Ingersoll usually cast his printed thoughts. Of this, there is

no stronger nor more pleasing evidence than the following fragment of one of his controversial papers:—

“Life is a shadowy, strange, and winding road on which we travel for a little way—a few short steps—just from the cradle, with its lullaby of love, to the low and quiet wayside inn, where all at last must sleep, and where the only salutation is—Good night.” (vi 62)

In exercising the art of expression, Ingersoll kept to himself all that was back of the scene. He made no explanation—offered no excuse. His presence was his prelude; his pen was his preface. He knew that a glance behind the canvas mars the effect of the greatest painting. Very few writers, and still fewer orators, appear to recognize this vital esthetic truth. Hence most of them, by way of introduction, usually exhibit all of the defects that an imperfect mastery can reveal—the crude ideas and rejected fragments—the very interior of their mental workshops. It is like a glimpse of the kitchen from the banquet board.

What would the tender and enthralling lines to “Chloris” be worth were they prefaced by Burns to imply, that, before writing them, he had carefully and conscientiously compared her with the other girls? Think of it!

Most writers are afflicted with a sort of verbose diathesis. Having almost no imagination, they credit the reader with a like amount. They anticipate the very motions of his brain—tell every-

thing. Their lines are prison-bars between which fettered fancy catches only now and then a glimpse of field and sky. With such a style, Ingersoll had no patience. He despised detail, the mathematical, the provincial. In short, he was an idealist; and his style, like the rainbow, arched in iridescent wonder the intellectual sky. He knew that one mind can get from another no more than it is "capable of receiving," and that, between the words, there should always be room for the reader or hearer to use the brush and chisel. He knew that every mind, in spite of others,—in spite of itself,—takes its own peculiar view. He realized that the greatest work of art is, at most, only a sort of mental arbor where cling and run the vines of fancy, springing from the brain of whomsoever reads or sees. Most of these vines would be dwarfed and flowerless, and not last half the season through; some might live, but would not thrive; others still, with exuberance interwoven, would tender to mating songsters the hospitality of countless leafy bowers, fling to summer dawns blossoms fit for *Juliet's* breast, while beneath the mellowing skies would hang, in clustered spheres and purple, the smiles and tears of April days, the amorous kisses of unnumbered suns.

There is a particular circumstance which those who would form a just estimate of Ingersoll's expressional faculties should keep constantly in mind: he was, first of all, an orator. By dint of

the orator's power and prestige did he lay claim upon contemporaries; and under the orator's almost fateful disadvantages must he lay claim upon posterity. The present has memories; the future will have type and tradition. The critic, the student, even the admirer, in the years to be will know and feel only so much of the expressional power of this great personality as can be conveyed by the illusive and inadequate medium of the insensate page. Gone,—fading in the mist of memory,—the noble form; silent,—echoing only in the hearts of a lessening few,—the voice that soothed and silvered common speech, and glorified the unremembering air; vanished the enthralling presence—a presence that held in magic spell the spirit of the springtime dawn,—the calm of fulfilled noon,—the peacefulness of eventide,—the tranquillity of midnight upon the star-lit plain.

So in Ingersoll the orator were blended, in matchless harmony, nature's rarest and noblest gifts. The circumstances under which the latter first became manifest,—under which he discovered himself,—are as interesting as they were anomalous.

Robert Ingersoll was in his late teens when a presumably orthodox gentleman who had been selected to speak at a Sunday-school picnic, on the Fourth of July, near a small town in Illinois, was prevented by illness, at the veritable "eleventh hour," from keeping his engagement. Thereupon the good people who were charged with seeing that

the programme was carried out in its original completeness, and who had heard something of young Ingersoll's oratorical inclinations, invited him to take the place of the delinquent one.

The youthful substitute chose as his theme the patriots and heroes of the Revolution. Familiar, of course, with the great and noble services which Thomas Paine had rendered, not only to America, but to the whole world, before, during, and after that struggle, and resenting, with deepest indignation, the base ingratitude which had been his lot simply and solely because of his subsequent deistical and antichristian writings, Ingersoll had previously made a resolution never to deliver a speech without mentioning the name of the "Author-Hero." The probability that those whom he was about to address were somewhat deficient in reliable data concerning the author of *Common Sense*, *The Crisis*, *The Rights of Man*, etc. doubtless served to confirm, in Ingersoll's judgment, the wisdom of the resolution just mentioned. Anyway, the memory of Thomas Paine received at that Sunday-school picnic its rightful meed. This, of course, was met with resentment—resentment which the youthful speaker read unmistakably in the faces and voices of his orthodox elders. But in the same faces and voices, he read something else—evidence of kindled emotion; for, many times during his speech,—made without preparation,—his hearers were moved alternately to laughter and tears. In that laughter and



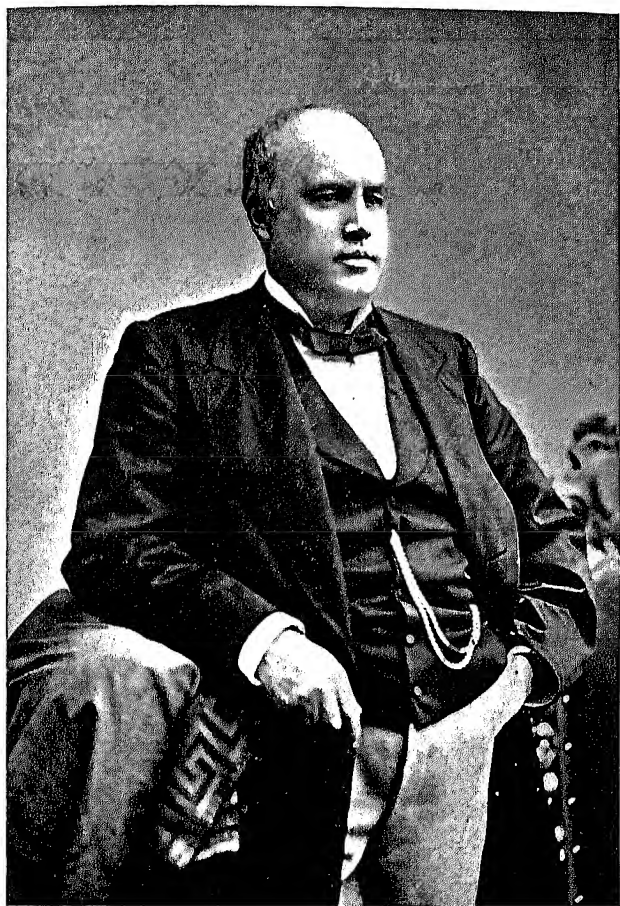
those tears,—in that April of his genius,—Robert Ingersoll saw the many-colored bow of promise. For the first time, he realized that he held the magic key which, even through the cankerous rust of prejudice, could reach and unlock the secrets of the soul.

Of the "rarest and noblest gifts," visible and invisible, which 'nature blended with matchless harmony in Ingersoll the orator,' I would here mention eyes, features, and physique; for these were by no means the least of the many factors which combined to constitute in him "that wonderful thing called presence."

His eyes, then, were light-blue, changing, with varying moods, to gray,—changing markedly; and his face was "the face that mirrored thoughts." Among the orators of the world, from Pericles to the present, there is no face like the face of Ingersoll. As you gaze upon it, you feel that nature has reached the summit—that she can rise no higher, can do no more—that she, at last, has done what she set out to do. This face is *human*!—you feel that a great brain is in partnership with a great heart, and that the heart is senior partner. The lines of the former seem everywhere just subdued by the lines of the latter—the lines of intellect to blend easily, gladly, with the lines of art. The forehead, the eyes, the nose, of the thinker are also those of the artist and philanthropist; the mouth and chin of the intellectual gladiator are

also the mouth and chin of the poet,—almost the mother. As you gaze upon this face, you feel that mercy, at last, has found expression—even in the face of an unfortunate, a friend; that the moans of every martyr,—the longings of every exile,—the agonies of every victim of dungeon, rack, and chain,—the burdens of every slave,—the despair and wretchedness of every outcast,—the cries of every mothered babe,—the sobs and yearnings of every abused or hungry child,—were heard and felt by the unknown sculptor who traced the lines;—and those lines express the rapturous realization of every un-  
con-wished, but hitherto unpictured and unbodied, ideal. And you feel that, after all, martyrdom was not in vain; that the future of this race has possibilities; that its future is radiant with hope. This face has the contour, the symmetry, the poise and balance, the confidence, the integrity, the frankness, the open honesty—of nature. In it are the joy of June and the serenity of September. And yet there is earnestness, determination, unmistakable. In fact, you look upon this face, and you feel that, were you just a trifle less serious, you should smile. You look a moment longer, and—you smile! and are satisfied.

In height Ingersoll was six feet, minus half an inch; and, in his prime, he weighed from two hundred to two hundred and twenty pounds. This statement, in conjunction with the preceding



1877

(Æt. 44)

From a photograph by Bradley and Rulopson, San Francisco.



and illustrations, might, perhaps, suffice as a description of his physical appearance, were it not for the remarkable fact (repeatedly noted by intimate friends), that, when he stepped upon the platform before an audience, he seemed suddenly to become a giant in stature,—far ampler and taller than he actually was—seemed to rise on the spirit of the occasion, to the supreme command of everything in sight! The greater the occasion and the audience, the greater he seemed to become, and the higher he seemed to rise. He was peculiarly, preëminently, “the born orator”—born anew with every inspiration. Of incomparable physique,—the broad and massive shoulders supporting a perfectly molded head—with the formidableness of an antique warrior, and yet the gentle mien of a child—his was a presence to command the attention of the Olympian gods. The admirer of the majestic, the heroic, the classic in poise and bearing,—of the Grecian ideal in breathing flesh,—who never sat with an audience as Robert G. Ingersoll strode upon the stage and stood “foursquare to all the winds that blew,” has missed such an unforgettable impression as will not again be the proud and happy fortune of mankind.

Oratory is the noblest stream that flows from the hidden spring of the ideal to the illimitable ocean of expression. Ingersoll was acquainted by nature with the course of that stream—knew its every inch, from where it, dallying, sparkles like a silver

thread among the rocks and hills of thought, to where its mighty current forces back the tides of error in the broad estuary of persuasion.

Of course, as already mentioned, oratory cannot be put upon paper. It cannot even be separated from the times and the scenes that produce it, nor from the effects that it in turn produces. As dead protoplasm is no longer protoplasm, so a printed oration is not an oration. The unprecedented occasion—the opportunity previously sought in vain, but now within the orator's grasp; the vast assemblage waiting only for the magic voice that shall set vibrating in unison with each other, and with those of the orator, the secret chords of sympathy and emotion; the flashing eye, the poise, the gesture, and the thrilling pause—language too eloquent for utterance—these are as much a part of the oration as are its words.

But while the latter alone are comparatively valueless in judging the orator as such, they do enable us to judge him as verbal artist and philosopher.

To attempt a final selection from the gems that, for forty years, fell from the golden lips of Ingersoll, seems well nigh hopeless. To choose from most other geniuses, would be an easy task. Their average product contains enough of the commonplace to distinguish passages that are really grand. But Ingersoll left nothing commonplace. Great lines,—thoughts that touch the universal,—poems

of subtle shade,—are found on almost every page. Many sentences are music, as sweet as the Orphean lyre, and will hold their power to charm as long as genius knows its kith and kin. There was no thought, fancy, sentiment, emotion, or passion in the expression of which he was not supreme. He was the Phidias of verbal sculpture—the Michaelangelo of words. From the gallery of his mind, he selected symbols, figures, pictures, as easily,—as naturally,—as the sea tosses upon the sand a nameless gem.

So the question as to which is Ingersoll's oratorical masterpiece is preëminently,—almost distinctively,—one that does not permit of a confident answer. Yet, ask the average person to name that masterpiece, and he will mention the "Plumed Knight Speech" or *A Tribute to Ebon C. Ingersoll* or, possibly, *A Vision of War*. Why I do not know. Probably it is because he has read one of them. For, though perfect of their kind, none of them, I judge, is better entitled to distinction than are several other productions of our orator.

Take the "Soliloquy" at the grave of Napoleon—only a few sentences, to be sure—a few touches of the brush; and yet it is a complete and perfect picture of that marvelous life, from the insatiable ambition which would grasp and hold the world, to the Stygian midnight of despair and gloom which settled at St. Helena. There, "gazing out upon the sad and solemn sea"—"the only woman that ever

loved him pushed from his heart by the cold ha of ambition"—stands the great Napoleon. A beside the "poor peasant," in "wooden shoe but surrounded by loving wife and happy child how small and wretched!

Then there is "The Cemetery"—"that cemetery called the past," wherein are "most the religions of men," and "nearly all their gods from India's mystic shrines to the divine fires of our Aztecs—a view of comparative mythology and religion which is universal in its scope, and which is expressed with the charm of consummate art."

And the Shakespearean lecture—a vine of words that twines with subtle delicacy and grace around the mighty oak of Shakespeare's brain. I have often thought that there are two productions which should be in the hands of every student of English literature—Spencer's *Philosophy of Style* and Ingersoll's lecture on Shakespeare: the first, to show *why* certain words and expressions are used in preference to others; the last, *how* they are used. This lecture contains, in my judgment, the noblest metaphor in our language:—

"Shakespeare was an intellectual ocean, whose waves touched the shores of thought; within which were all the tides and waves of destiny and will; over which swept all the storms of fate, ambition and revenge; upon which fell the gloom and darkness of despair, death and all the sunlight of content and love, and within which the inverted sky lit with the eternal stars—an intellectual ocean towards which all rivers ran, and from which now the islands and continents of thought receive their dew and rain." (iii 73)



Many other selections, taken here and there, are hardly less notable. How many have read the following? and yet what physiologist, psychologist, poet, or philosopher has left a truer description of the human brain?—

"The dark continent of motive and desire has never been explored. In the brain, that wondrous world with one inhabitant, there are recesses dim and dark, treacherous sands and dangerous shores, where seeming sirens tempt and fade; streams that rise in unknown lands from hidden springs, strange seas with ebb and flow of tides, resistless billows urged by storms of flame, profound and awful depths hidden by mist of dreams, obscure and phantom realms where vague and fearful things are half revealed, jungles where passion's tigers crouch, and skies of cloud and blue where fancies fly with painted wings that dazzle and mislead; and the poor sovereign of this pictured world is led by old desires and ancient hates, and stained by crimes of many vanished years, and pushed by hands that long ago were dust, until he feels like some bewildered slave that Mockery has throned and crowned." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 348)

Could the student of human nature—could any one who has climbed unhelped, or in spite of opposition, the ladder of success—possibly fail to catch the golden thread that runs through this iambic epigram?—

"Obstruction is but virtue's foil. From thwarted light leaps color's flame. The stream impeded has a song." (xii 423)

Think of the spirit of liberty that breathes through this sentence:—

"Let us go the broad way where science goes—through the open fields, past the daisied slopes, where sunlight, lingering, seems to sleep and dream."

His ability to find in the words of his very adversaries the weapons of attack,—to capture the enemy's ordnance and use it against its owner,—is well shown in describing "The Infidel":—

"He knew that all the pomp and glitter had been purchased with Liberty—that priceless jewel of the soul. In looking at the cathedral he remembered the dungeon. The music of the organ was not loud enough to drown the clank of fetters. He could not forget that the taper had lighted the fagot. He knew that the cross adorned the hilt of the sword, and so where others worshiped, he wept." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 96)

What other orator, standing at the grave of a friend, has uttered such praise as the following?—hyperbole so perfect that it actually does not seem an exaggeration!—

"Her heart was open as the gates of day. She shed kindness as the sun sheds light. If all her deeds were flowers, the air would be faint with perfume. If all her charities could change to melodies, a symphony would fill the sky." (xii 454)

And could human speech be more tenderly pathetic than in the lines in behalf of the aged actors whom death has claimed?—

"And then the silence falls on darkness.

"Some loving hands should close their eyes; some loving lips should leave upon their pallid brows a kiss; some friends should lay the breathless forms away, and on the graves drop blossoms jeweled with the tears of love." (xii 204)

It required three of the Rhodian artists to chisel the Laocoon group; but, in the *Decoration Day*

ation of 1882, Ingersoll alone chiseled an  
ogorical group, which, in perfection at least,  
ts companion-piece:—

Pity pointed to the scarred and bleeding backs of slaves; Mercy  
d the sobs of mothers reft of babes, and Justice held aloft the  
es, in which one drop of blood shed by a master's lash, outweighed  
ation's gold." (ix 428)

Having included the preceding, it would be very  
d to omit the closing sentences of *A Vision of*  
*War*:—

These heroes are dead. They died for liberty—they died for us.  
y are at rest. They sleep in the land they made free, under the  
they rendered stainless, under the solemn pines, the sad hemlocks,  
earful willows, and the embracing vines. They sleep beneath the  
ows of the clouds, careless alike of sunshine or of storm, each in  
windowless palace of Rest. Earth may run red with other wars  
ey are at peace. In the midst of battle, in the roar of conflict,  
found the serenity of death. I have one sentiment for soldiers  
g and dead: Cheers for the living; tears for the dead." (*Prose-*  
*ous and Selections*, p. 31)

What majesty! What harmony! What soulful  
fection!—"under the solemn pines, the sad  
mlocks, the tearful willows, and the embracing  
es"; and "in the windowless palace of Rest."  
e must indeed be faintly impressible to beauty,  
o should hope to do justice to the author of such  
rds as these.

Were he not necessarily aware of the sad depth  
which the noxious roots of religious prejudice  
etrate the mental soil of mediocrity, the justly

appreciative reader of the selections here quoted or mentioned would, despairing, wonder at the comparatively meager praise elsewhere bestowed upon their author. And with a reviewer who should utterly ignore the source of so many matchless thoughts, such reader could have but little patience. Suppose that the spirit of an absolutely unprejudiced literary critic, visiting this earth from another sphere, should find in some "Library of the World's Best Literature" liberal selections from America's recognized literati, with no mention of *Life*, *A Vision of War*, *Shakespeare*, or any of the "tributes." What, in the reader's judgment, would be that angel's opinion of literary editors? Yet this is precisely what would be found. There are in our libraries to-day compilations containing no reference to Ingersoll, but including productions of scores of writers who are all but commonplace, and whose combined efforts could never have resulted in even one of his masterpieces.

He shared with poets and philosophers the ability to express, with appositeness, lucidity, and beauty, the utmost in a line. He was gifted to an extraordinary degree with the phrasal and the epigrammatic faculties. Definitions, descriptions, comparisons, illustrations, generalizations, fell from his lips as fall the ripened fruits from autumn's laden boughs.

Thus he referred to the bygone centuries as—

## *HIS FACULTIES OF EXPRESSION*

"The withered leaves of time that strew the desert of the past."

In the aurora borealis, he beheld—

"the morning of the North when the glittering lances pierce the shield of night."

He was—

"touched and saddened by autumn, the grace and poetry of death."

Where others saw merely the snowflakes blown singly or in flurries, he could see—

"the infantry of the snows and the cavalry of the wild blast."

Than this it would be difficult to find in English a more strikingly suggestive figure.

With a delicacy rivaling Shelley's reference to the lids of the sleeping Ianthe, he described the breast of woman as—

"life's drifted font, blue-veined and fair, where perfect peace finds perfect form."

Condemning alike the practices of the "insane ascetic" and the "fool of pleasure," he defined temperance as—

"the golden path along the strip of verdure that lies between the deserts of extremes."

The secret of his countless tributes to manhood, heroism, and genius is revealed in this line:—

"Gratitude is the fairest flower that sheds its perfume in the heart."

There was in Ingersoll the marvelous extravagance of Hugo—of Shakespeare. Referring to the hopefulness of a beautiful but helpless girl—a paralytic—whom he had visited, he said that—

“her brave and cheerful spirit shone over the wreck and ruin of her body *like morning on the desert.*”<sup>1</sup>

While the selections thus far quoted,—particularly in the present chapter,—are extraordinarily rich in epigrammatic quality, they are nevertheless inadequate in doing full justice to Ingersoll’s genius in the latter regard.

Our philosopher was not one of those individuals who sit down deliberately to write epigrams. Had he been such, he doubtless would not now be creditable with a greater number of really noteworthy sayings than any other American. Like Burns’s poems, Ingersoll’s epigrams wrote themselves.

In the one that follows, we are reminded, by the way, of the “ploughman poet’s” partiality for common sense and real genius, in contradistinction to mere book-learning and acquired talent :—

“For the most part, colleges are places where pebbles are polished and diamonds are dimmed.”

In our next selection, we find cause to wonder at Ingersoll’s intimate knowledge of things in which he never indulged :—

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<sup>1</sup> The italics are mine.

## *HIS FACULTIES OF EXPRESSION*

"A brazen falsehood and a timid truth are the parents of compromise."

And—

"Apology is the prelude to retreat."

In illustration of the truth that great cares and sorrows are rare with most of us,—that trivialities make up the bulk of life's burdens,—he said:—

"The traveler is bothered more with dust than mountains."

He observed that—

"The road is short to anything we fear,"

That—

"Joy lives in the house beyond the one we reach,"

And that—

"Hope is the only bee that makes honey without flowers."

Ingersoll uttered in the fewest, shortest words the profoundest philosophic truths,—the wisest ethical precepts.

Than the following sixteen syllables what pompous array of sentences and paragraphs could more truly express the conclusion of every candid man who has really thought?—

"The golden bridge of life from gloom emerges and on shadow rests."

He was the philosopher, not only of moral, but

of mental honesty,—of perfect intellectual veracity; and he observed that—

“Cunning plates fraud with the gold of honesty, and veneers vice with virtue,”

But that, nevertheless—

“There is nothing shrewder in this world than intelligent honesty. Perfect candor is sword and shield.”

And he declared that—

“Nobility is a question of character, not of birth.

“Honor cannot be received as alms—it must be earned.

“It is the brow that makes the wreath of glory green.”

He was the philosopher of right:—

“Every man in the right is my brother.”

Although painfully aware that “innocence is not a perfect shield” against the aggressiveness of evil, he still asserted that—

“The gem of the brain is the innocence of the soul.”

He was the philosopher of human love—a believer in its protecting and redeeming powers:—

“Vice lives either before Love is born, or after Love is dead.”

In the following line, conscience comes to solace the victim of unmerited neglect:—

“It is better to deserve without receiving than to receive without deserving.”



## *HIS FACULTIES OF EXPRESSION*

He was the philosopher of freedom :—

"In the realm of Freedom, waste is husbandry. He who puts chains upon the body of another shackles his own soul."

He was the philosopher of sympathy. He believed that no character could be so lofty that it would not be elevated by pitying even the very lowest :—

"We rise by raising others—and he who stoops above the fallen, stands erect."

To those who would seek life's goal solely in the heights of fame, he said :—

"Happiness dwells in the valleys with the shadows."

He condenses the conclusions of modern physical science into these nine words :—

"A grain of sand can defy all the gods."

In the following line our language is enriched with a new definition :—

"Wisdom is the science of happiness."

To the morally short-sighted, he utters this warning :—

"He loads the dice against himself, who scores a point against the right."

Is there in progressive literature a more substantial line than the following?—

"Fear is the dungeon of the mind."

He declares that—

"Intellectual freedom is only the right to be honest."

This is one of the subtlest and profoundest truths. A person who has not the right to express his honest thoughts has not the right to be honest.

But in none of the preceding epigrams, perhaps, is there stronger proof of profound and subtle intellect than in the following fragment of an argument for the doctrine of necessity :—

"To the extent that we have wants, we are not free. To the extent that we do not have wants, we do not act."

And yet it has been said that the author of these lines was not a thinker !

It is barely necessary to state, that, making due allowance, in many cases, for unavoidable incompleteness, the selections which have been included in this chapter, and in this work as a whole, are, in my judgment, fairly representative of the artistic and intellectual Ingersoll. Should they not seem fully to justify my estimate of him, I could only wish that they might at least awaken sufficient interest to prompt their unbiased comparison with an equal number of selections, of kindred nature, from some reformer, lawyer, patriot, philosopher, orator, and poet whose title to enduring fame is universally recognized.

## CHAPTER XIX.

*UNIVERSAL REGRET AT HIS DEATH—  
A SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK  
IN (1) POLITICS, (2) THE LAW, (3)  
THE FIELD OF RATIONAL-  
ISM—HIS INFLUENCE ON  
RELIGIOUS THOUGHT*

THE DEATH of Robert G. Ingersoll, on July 21, 1899, was one of the most widely noted events of that year in the civilized world. It was also one of the most widely and profoundly regretted,—the most deeply deplored. Everywhere, the wisest knew (and the noblest felt) that the cause of humanity had met its greatest loss. To many thousands who realized the intellectual amplitude, the moral heroism and grandeur, the boundless generosity and sympathy, the tenderness and affection, of this incomparable man, his passing was as an intimate and bitter bereavement.

Ingersoll was doubtless known, personally and otherwise, to more people than any other American who had not sat in the presidential chair; and, notwithstanding either the number or the wishes

of his critics, his death probably brought genuine grief to more hearts than has that of any other individual in our history. Twice before, "a Nation bowed and wept"; this time, a people.

No sooner was the world apprised of its loss, than wires and cables were freighted with words that indicated, as unmistakably as volumes could have done, the place which he who had so unexpectedly passed the somber portals had occupied in the esteem and love of mankind. Hundreds of messages reached "Walston," many from humble individuals, many from distinguished personages in America and in Europe; while from like sources came thousands of letters. Of course, these communications differed widely in wording; but their common burden seemed to be: "The greatest and noblest of his kind has fallen, and we mourn."

The attention of the daily press was universal, the papers of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Europe, and even of Africa, publishing accounts of his death, biographical sketches, anecdotes, and extracts from his works. These accounts, sketches, and so forth varied in length, from a quarter of a column or so, to a full page or more, of the principal dailies. Countless editorials appeared, some of them several columns long. Sermons and briefer clerical comments were quite innumerable; and there were many magazine reviews. Distinctively eulogistic offerings to newspapers and periodicals were impressively numerous. It is

## *SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE*

especially notable that very many of these tributes took the form of verse. One such was written by a native of South India. Memorial meetings were held in many places in the United States, north and south, east and west, and in Canada and England. Societies were formed in his name, days set apart to his memory. Subscriptions for the erection of monuments were started in several places. It is particularly significant that the citizens of Peoria opened such a subscription only two days after his death.

In their public invitation to subscribers, they stated, in part, through the instrumentality of the Ingersoll Monument Association :—

"The late Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll was a conspicuous figure in the history of the present century. Of heroic character, indomitable perseverance, and fearlessness, born of what he believed to be the right, he was at once the gentlest, most affectionate, lovable, and the strongest character of his day."

The monument association just mentioned was formed at the memorial meeting which was held in the Tabernacle, on July 23, 1899, and which, in its manifestations of esteem, admiration, and love, was impressive beyond description. Numerously attended,—by Freethinkers and Christians alike,—the leading citizens of Peoria,—it is impossible to do more than to note, in passing, the scores of individual tributes,—many of which, from hearts overfull, were uttered in broken words. But the final resolutions (although partially quoted, in a

particular connection, in Chapter IV) are presented in full:—

" *Whereas*, in the order of nature—that nature which moves with unerring certainty in obedience to fixed laws—Robert G. Ingersoll has gone to that repose which we call death,

" *Resolved*, That we, his old friends and fellow-citizens, who have shared his friendship in the past, hereby manifest the respect due his memory. At a time when everything impelled him to conceal his opinions or to withhold their expression, when the highest honors of the state were his if he would but avoid the discussion of the questions that relate to futurity, he avowed his belief; he did not bow his knee to superstition nor countenance a creed from which his intellect dissented.

" Casting aside all the things for which men most sigh—political honor, the power to direct the fortunes of the state, riches and emoluments, the association of the worldly and the well-to-do—he stood forth and expressed his honest doubts, and he welcomed the ostracism that came with it, as a crown of glory, no less than did the martyrs of old.

" Even this self-sacrifice has been accounted shame to him, saying that he was urged thereto by a desire for financial gain, when at the time he made his stand there was before him only the prospect of loss and the scorn of the public. We, therefore, who know what a struggle it was to cut loose from his old associations, and what it meant to him at that time, rejoice in his triumph and in the plaudits that came to him from thus boldly avowing his opinions, and we desire to record the fact that we feel that he was greater than a saint, greater than a mere hero—he was a thoroughly honest man.

" He was a believer, not in the narrow creed of a past barbarous age, but a true believer in all that men ought to hold sacred, the sanctity of the home, the purity of friendship, and the honesty of the individual. He was not afraid to advocate the fact that eternal truth was eternal justice; he was not afraid of the truth, nor to avow that he owed allegiance to it first of all, and he was willing to suffer shame and condemnation for its sake.

" The laws of the universe were his bible; to do good, his religion, and he was true to his creed. We therefore commend his life, for he was the apostle of the fireside, the evangel of justice and love and charity and happiness.

## SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE

"We who knew him when he first began his struggle, his old neighbors and friends, rejoice at the testimony he has left us, and we commend his life and efforts as worthy of emulation.

"*Resolved*, That we extend our heartfelt sympathy to his family in their great loss, and that a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to them."

Even more significant, because coming from a source of still more intimate knowledge, are the resolutions that were adopted at a regimental meeting of the surviving members of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry Volunteers, in Peoria, on July 26th:—

"Robert G. Ingersoll is dead. The brave soldier, the unswerving patriot, the true friend, and the distinguished colonel of that old regiment of which we have the honor to be a remnant, sleeps his last sleep.

"No word of ours, though written in flame, no chaplet that our hands can weave, no testimony that our personal knowledge can bring, will add anything to his fame, which the American public will not now freely accord.

"The world honors him as the prince of orators in his generation, as its emancipator from manacles and dogmas; philosophy, for his aid in beating back the ghosts of superstition; and we, in addition to these, for our personal knowledge of him, as a man, a soldier, and a friend.

"We knew him as the general public did not. We knew him in the military camp, where he reigned an uncrowned king, ruling with that bright scepter of human benevolence which death alone could wrest from his hand.

"We had the honor to obey, as we could, his calm but resolute commands at Shiloh, at Corinth, and at Lexington, knowing as we did, that he would never command a man to go where he would not care to lead the way.

"Hence we recognize only a small circle around his recent heaven and home, who could know more of his manliness and worth than we do. And to such we say: Look up, if you can, through natural

tears; try to be as brave as he was, and try to remember—in the midst of a grief which his greatest wish for life would have been to help you to bear—that he had no fear of death nor of anything beyond.

“And we, the survivors, comrades of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry, extend to his widow and children our condolence in this hour of their sad bereavement.”

At a memorial meeting of Webb Command, Union Veterans' Union, held in Peoria, on August 11th, it was similarly resolved, among other things, that “this nation has lost one of its brightest ornaments, and humanity one of its best, bravest, and truest friends.”

More numerous attended than any of the meetings thus far mentioned, and quite as impressive in every other respect, was the one held in Studebaker Hall, Chicago, on August 6th, under the joint auspices of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry Veterans' Association and the Ingersoll Memorial Association, then just organized in that city. Thousands were present, many having journeyed from distant points in the United States and Canada. The meeting was presided over by Mr. Thomas Cratty, of Peoria; Mr. Darrow (the eminent lawyer and author), Colonel Davidson, and Colonel Carr, whose works were quoted in Chapters III and VIII, being among the speakers. Perhaps a majority of the latter not only, but of the audience as well, were adherents to the Christian religion. The services occupied about four hours.

Of this remarkable demonstration, little further



## *SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE*

can be stated than that every word with which the mortal living are wont to voice their esteem, their admiration, their love and adoration, for the immortal dead was utilized in its most meaning eloquence. Earnestly, tenderly, reverently was the opinion avowed, by every speaker, Christian and freethought alike, that the fame of Ingersoll was secure. Some went far beyond this, Mr. Cratty declaring, in substance, that 'upon the likeness of Ingersoll, future generations would gaze with more tenderness and joy than upon that of any other man, living or dead.' Another speaker expressed the belief that 'temples will be built to Ingersoll, and his image be worshiped, when all gods and religions now known on earth shall have been forgotten.' "He uttered more sublime words," said Mr. C. A. Wendle, of Ottawa, "than any other man who ever lived." Mr. Darrow touched the keynote of his address in the following:—

"Robert G. Ingersoll was a great man, a wonderful intellect, a great soul of matchless courage, one of the great men of the earth—and yet we have no right to bow down to his memory simply because he was great. \* \* \* Great orators, great soldiers, great lawyers, often use their gifts for a most unholy cause. \* \* \* We meet to pay a tribute of love and respect to Robert G. Ingersoll \* \* \* because he used his matchless power for the good of man."

The same eloquent testimony, with much other which was far more eulogistic, but which cannot be presented here, was borne by Colonel Carr:—

"He was the boldest, most aggressive, courageous, virile, and the

kindest and gentlest and most considerate and loving man I ever knew. His was a nature that yielded to no obstacles, that could not be moved nor turned aside by the allurements of place or position, the menaces of power, the favors of the opulent, or the enticing influences of public opinion. Entering upon his career in an age of obscurity and time-serving, when the values of political and religious views were estimated by what they would bring from the ruling party and from the church, in offices and emoluments and benefices, he assailed the giant evils of the times with the strength and power of Hercules and ground them to dust under his trip-hammer blows. Throughout his whole active life, there has been no greater and more potential influence than the personality of this sublime character in breaking the shackles of the slave, and in freeing men and women and children from the bonds of ignorance and superstition."

How truly the several speakers whom I have quoted reflected the consensus of their auditors, may be judged by the following extracts from the resolutions that those auditors adopted:—

*"Resolved*, That in the consideration of the place to be worthily and properly accredited to him in the estimation of his countrymen for his discharge of the duties and responsibilities of the citizen, the soldier, and the statesman, his comrades and friends in Illinois feel that the state which gave to the nation a Lincoln and a Grant has contributed to enrich the records of American citizenship in the life, person, and character of Robert G. Ingersoll. In him broad-minded toleration was tempered with even-handed justice, and a gracious beneficence was qualified by a keen sense of private responsibility and public duty. His companions and friends can share with his family the substantial satisfaction of knowing that no impure motives or unworthy aims ever sullied the purity of his private life or marred the unblemished integrity of his personal character.

*"Resolved*, That in his career as a soldier and commanding officer in the Union army the example of Robert G. Ingersoll is worthy of emulation by the American citizen at any time or in any emergency when the interests of his country may demand his services. We recall with pride and affection his prompt and earnest devotion to the cause of the Union in the hour of its greatest peril.

## SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE

*"Resolved,* That as a statesman and publicist Robert G. Ingersoll achieved a high and enduring place in the estimation of all who stand for good citizenship, social and civic morality, and a high standard of private and public life.

"A master spirit in a masterful and prolific age, the gentle life and mighty work of Robert G. Ingersoll have reflected luster upon American institutions, and have won for him undying fame in the hearts of those who are devoted to the achievement for their countrymen of the greatest good for the greatest number.

On the same date as that of the preceding resolutions, thousands of the citizens of Denver met, in the Broadway Theater there, in another very notable manifestation. To pay a debt of gratitude and love to "the champion of freedom, the most earnest and eloquent defender of the rights of man, woman, and child, the most fearless opponent of superstition, and the advocate of the oppressed against the oppressor," was, in the language of the memorial minutes, the object of the meeting. The latter was most impressive,—impressive in the same respects as the meetings in Peoria and Chicago. Therefore, it would be but repetition to do more than to indicate the substance and spirit of the principal address.

In this, Governor Thomas declared that the character of Ingersoll "was as nearly perfect as it is possible for the character of mortal man to be"; that 'none sweeter or nobler had ever blessed the world'; that 'the example of his life was of more value to posterity than all the sermons that were ever written on the doctrine of original sin.' "He

had," said the speaker, "the earnestness of a Luther, the genius for humor and wit and satire of a Voltaire, a wide amplitude of imagination, and a greatness of heart and brain that placed him upon an equal footing with the greatest thinkers of antiquity. \* \* \* He stands, at the close of his career, the first great reformer of the age."

Not less notable, as evidence of the widespread appreciation of Ingersoll's love of and efforts for humanity, regardless of creed or race, are the following resolutions, which, proposed by a Christian clergyman, were enthusiastically adopted by the Indiana State Afro-American conference at Indianapolis, on July 26th:—

*"Resolved,* That in the recent death of Robert G. Ingersoll, the nation has lost one of its greatest orators, statesmen, and patriots, and the Afro-Americans one of the greatest champions of civil rights. Mr. Ingersoll always advocated the rights of the oppressed. His ability and his purse were always at the service of our people. On all questions that arose concerning the colored people, Mr. Ingersoll was always found on our side.

*"Resolved,* That this conference, in common with the colored people of this nation, do deplore his death, and hereby tender our greatest sympathy to his bereaved family."

Even more significant, as will be evident from its source, is the next manifestation of regard and sympathy to be presented here. In form of a letter to Mrs. Ingersoll, from Mr. Owen Miller, president of the American Federation of Musicians, it shows how truly appreciated by the profession concerned

## *SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE*

were the highest and finest attributes of Ingersoll's many-sided nature:—

"On behalf of 15,000 professional musicians, comprising the American Federation of Musicians, permit me to extend to you our heartfelt and most sincere sympathy in the irreparable loss of the model husband, father, and friend. In him the musicians of not only this country, but of all countries, have lost one whose noble nature grasped the true beauties of our sublime art, and whose intelligence gave those impressions expression in words of glowing eloquence that will live as long as language exists."

Of the numerous memorial meetings and resolutions of societies having a distinctively rationalistic purpose, no specific mention has been, or will be, made. Assumed as inevitable, such meetings and resolutions are less truly indicative of Ingersoll's place in the public esteem and affection than those of a more general character. On the other hand, such of the resolutions as have been quoted, representing, as they do, merely the formal consensus of the meetings concerned, afford but an inadequate notion of the individual feelings of thousands who were present,—feelings which, indeed, it was altogether impossible for any memorial resolutions to convey. They were doubtless most truly voiced by Mr. John McGovern when he said, at Chicago: "This great public meeting is not a proper testimonial to him. Only silence is adequate to express the world's irreparable loss."

Nor can these individual expressions be noted to any considerable extent; and this applies alike

to those of the avowed rationalist and the avowed religionist,—to the extraordinarily eulogistic tributes of hundreds of rationalists as well as to the estimates of a score or so of Christian clergymen who have publicly admitted that, in purity and nobility, the life of Ingersoll was like that of Christ.

But while these individual tributes, for the most part, must be excluded for spacial reasons, there is in connection with them, or nearly all of them, whether of rationalistic or Christian authorship, a fact so peculiarly significant as to preclude the possibility of its being ignored. It is this: The praise which their authors bestow upon Ingersoll is directly proportional to their own recognized artistic and intellectual standing. In other words, they seem to bear with reference to him the same sympathetic mental relation that he himself declares that all men bear to Shakespeare: they get from him all that they are capable of receiving. This may be noted in the various tributes and comments of Garfield, Beecher, Whitman, Booth, Barrett, Joseph Jefferson, Remenyi, Seidl, Conway, Hubbard, *Mark Twain*, and many others in America. It may be noted in the action of Haeckel, "the Darwin of Germany,"—foremost biologist of the world,—who, in 1899, sent his portrait, together with one of his latest works, inscribed "To Colonel Robert Ingersoll, the valorous champion in the struggle of truth." It may be noted in the case of

## SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE

Björnson, who has translated *Ingersoll* into Norwegian (and into the translator's own heart!), and who writes: "I am very sorry, that, when I was in America, I did not have the opportunity to grasp the hand of a man who, with the sword, fought to free from bodily slavery three millions of people, and who has shown the way to intellectual freedom to many millions more"; and, "I envy the land that brings forth such glorious fruit as an Ingersoll." It may be noted in tributes from just across the Atlantic—in the tribute of Huxley, of Holyoke, and of *Saladin*, who declares that Ingersoll "is with Homer and Tully and Shakespeare and Burns"; and, lastly, in that of Swinburne, who, from the golden summit of English letters, wrote that prior to July 21, 1899, he had one reason for desiring to visit America.

Not less expressive of admiration and devotion than the latter references to the dead, had been the letters from like sources to the living himself. Typical of these is the one quoted, in part, below,—from the poet, novelist, and thinker Edgar Fawcett:—

"UNION CLUB,

"[NEW YORK,] August 10th [1894].

"MY DEAR COLONEL:

"I read your splendid letter in the *World* [on *Is Suicide a Sin?*], and it made me more loyally fond of you than ever; more devotedly your admirer too. That is truly a great deal for me to say, as you know, since my devotion and admiration are both an old story. How ridiculous is the state law! \* \* \* You put the whole thing with

a superb lucidity, and with a gentle eloquence which reminds one of an athlete's hand in a silken glove. The answer of ——— was pitifully vacuous and fatuous, but not more so than that of ———.

"I do so wish, that, in all these big questions, literary men would take you more for a guide than they do, or seem to do. You have, of course, an immense constituency; but your love of letters and your deeply poetic spirit render you worthy of a far greater reverence and respect from *writers* than it seems to me that you receive. I want the brilliancy of your thought to penetrate our literature profoundly and permanently. But of course that will come. The younger generation of writers cannot escape you any more than the air they breathe. You will, indeed, be the air they breathe,—and hence, in many cases, if not all, their inspiration. Especially should the poets love you and sit at your feet. If you die before you see the change, I believe that those who now love you and survive you will see how much of the mere pictistic rubbish in modern poetry has been gradually yet surely swept away by the mighty besom of your fearless and noble intellect. \* \* \*

"Ever affectionately,

"EDGAR FAWCETT"—

an after-song, as it were, to the poem which he had recently addressed to Ingersoll, and of which the last stanza read:—

"And if record of genius like thine, or of eloquence fiery and deep,  
Shall remain to the centuries regnant from centuries lulled into sleep,  
Then thy memory as music shall float amid actions and aims yet to be,  
And thine influence cling to life's good as the sea-vapors cling to the sea!"

The Himalayan immensity of Ingersoll's labor and achievements can best be realized by viewing him in three separate fields: First, that of Ration



alism,—in its most radical and comprehensive sense; second, that of the Law; third, that of Politics. For, to be more specific, his vocation was Rationalistic Reform; his two principal avocations were, first, the Law; second, Politics. Beginning inversely to this order, let us therefore finally consider his work and his influence.

### I.—IN POLITICS.

We should exceed the requirements of comprehensiveness, while failing of our very object, if we should crowd these pages with Ingersoll's opinions and teachings regarding the numerous questions that concern with ever-varying interest the citizens of the nation. Comparatively at least, many if not most of those questions are of minor and temporary importance. Beside the great fundamentals, they are as clouds that hang for a day on the political horizon, or flit rapidly across it, blown by the winds of partisan intrigue or of selfish personal ambition. Earnestly, masterfully, unanswerably as Ingersoll dealt, from time to time, during a long career, with such questions as the sphere and functions of government, the tariff, revenue, money, and so forth, he must be judged, if adequately and justly, upon far more basic and enduring ones.

In this connection, it seems barely necessary to remind the reader that Ingersoll possessed, in his very physical, intellectual, and moral constitution,

in at least as full measure as any other individual who has lived, the essentials of a profound, broad, and lofty appreciation of the significance and destiny of the American Republic. To paraphrase what he himself said of Humboldt: Great men,—great patriots,—seem to be a part of the infinite—brothers of the mountains and the seas. Ingersoll was one of these. Belonging, as he announced, “to the great church that holds the world within its star-lit aisles,”—loving all lands that love liberty,—he loved his own America most dearly of all. Its geographic amplitude; the wide range of climate,—from the imperishable white of Alaska’s “skyish” peaks, to tropic groves of orange, pine, and palm; the magnificent lakes,—oceans within a continent; the mighty Mississippi, “nature’s eternal protest against disunion”—“the Father of Waters” that “again goes unvexed to the sea”; the vast and boundless prairies, with golden wheat and bannered corn rustling like the murmur of the sea; the great plateaux,—fit stages for the dramas of Shakespeare, the operas of Wagner; the cañons, wild and grand; the Rockies, awful and sublime; and the Sierras,—nature’s dauntless picket-line to guard the Golden Gate—all these tallied with Ingersoll’s conception, not only of continental America, but of the physical, intellectual, and moral character of the ideal American. And, believing that “we are moulded and fashioned by our surroundings,” that “environment is a sculp-

tor," (iv 5) he believed that the things which I have mentioned tended to make the ideal American:—

"The great plains, the sublime mountains, the great rushing, roaring rivers, shores lashed by two oceans, and the grand anthem of Niagara, mingle and enter into the character of every American citizen, and make him or tend to make him a great and grand character." (ix 162)

And so Ingersoll would have the citizen as grand as the continent. He would have him "stand erect," not only beneath the Stars and Stripes, but beneath its eternal prototype, "the flag of nature, the blue and stars, the peer of every other man." He would have him share the aboriginal freedom of Whitman's declaration, "I'll sound my barbaric yap over the roofs of the world," and of that of Harriet Martineau, "I want to be a free rover on the breezy common of the universe." He longed for the time when every American would declare with him, in his incomparable "Apostrophe to Liberty":—

"O Liberty, thou art the god of my idolatry! Thou art the only Deity that hates the bended knee! In thy vast and unwall'd temple, beneath the roofless dome, star-gemmed and luminous with suns, thy worshipers stand erect! They do not cringe, or crawl, or bend their foreheads to the earth. The dust has never borne the impress of their lips.

\* \* \* \* \*

"Thou askest nought from man except the things that good men hate,—the whip, the chain, the dungeon key." \* \* \* (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 56)

And just as Ingersoll would have the citizen as grand as the continent, so, too, would he have the nation; for his ample appreciation of America's continental grandeur, together with his ardent love of liberty and justice, is evident in the intellectual breadth of his views and teachings on all fundamental political questions.

Strongly devoted, therefore, to the idea of national greatness, he was naturally opposed to the doctrine of "state rights,"—to "mud patriotism," as he termed it,—whenever such "rights" would detract, in the slightest degree, from the rights and the welfare of the nation as an indivisible whole. "I am in favor of this being a Nation. Think of a man gratifying his entire ambition in the State of Rhode Island!" (ix 162) So he believed in the absolute sovereignty of the Federal government in in all disputed questions affecting the people in common.

He taught that the citizen's first duty was to the nation; his second, to his state; that the nation's first duty was to the citizen; its second, to his state. He insisted that the citizen who, voluntarily or otherwise, placed his body between an enemy's bullets and the nation's flag was thereby entitled to the protection of the nation,—not only abroad,—but in any state in which he chanced to be, provided, of course, that the state itself had not afforded him protection. He declared that "any government that will not defend its defenders, and protect

its protectors, is a disgrace to the map of the world." (ix 58)

He believed in just and honest national expansion. He desired the Great Republic to march on as long as she could keep the highway of the right, and wear the mantle of honor and glory. He said, for instance: "I want Cuba whenever Cuba wants us," adding, in characteristic humor, "and I favor the idea of getting her in the notion of wanting us." And again, after expressing great satisfaction over the acquisition of Porto Rico, the Hawaiian Islands, and the Philippines:—

"Let the Republic grow! Let us spread the gospel of Freedom! In a few years I hope that Canada will be ours—I want Mexico—in other words, I want all of North America. I want to see our flag waving from the North Pole." (xii 286)

This he desired for the sake of liberty and humanity. For he regarded his country as "the chart and beacon of the human race"—"the one success of the world"—"the first and only republic that ever existed." And did our fair Columbia ever hear from human lips words of more ardent devotion than these?—

"Oh! I love the old Republic, bounded by the seas, walled by the wide air, domed by heaven's blue, and lit with the eternal stars. I love the Republic; I love it because I love liberty. Liberty is my religion, and at its altar I worship, and will worship." (ix 403)

He was always faithful. Never did he fail to rebuke any enemy of America who chanced to come

to his notice, whether that enemy was a native traitor or a foreign statesman or monarch. Least of all would he brook unjust criticism by a fellow-citizen. Referring, in one of the leading reviews, to such a criticism, he once wrote, by way of rebuke:—

"No American should ever write a line that can be sneeringly quoted by an enemy of the Great Republic."

He loved "Old Glory":—

"Say what you will of parties, say what you will of dishonesty, the holiest flag that ever kissed the air is ours!" "It represents the sufferings of the past, the glories yet to be; and like the bow of heaven, it is the child of storm and sun." (ix 433)

Again:—

"I have been in other countries and have said to myself, 'After all, my country is the best.' And when I came back to the sea and saw the old flag flying, it seemed as though the air, from pure joy, had burst into blossom." (*Prose-Poems and Selections*, p. 279)

These few quotations, typically Ingersollian,—beautiful and inspiring as they are unavoidably brief,—would admirably express the convictions and sentiments of many of our greatest patriots. But how inadequate, in their brevity and fewness, to express the convictions and sentiments of the very brain and heart,—the mighty personality,—from which they blossomed! I wish that I had the genius,—the alembic of thought and feeling,—to do justice to the patriotism, the Americanism,

of Robert G. Ingersoll. But I have not. I wish that I could distil into these fleeting lines the hatred of tyranny, slavery, and caste; the love of liberty and equality; the worship of justice; the gratitude for the founders and defenders of the Republic; the pride in her present, and the confidence in her future, greatness and glory, which are manifest in the *Centennial Oration*, *A Vision Of War*, the political speeches, the reunion addresses, the Decoration Day orations. But I can not. It is a task 'too subtle potent for the capacity of my ruder powers.'

Just here, it is well to remind the reader of what undoubtedly seems a paradox. In rationalism, Ingersoll was a rationalist; in law, Ingersoll was a lawyer; but in politics, Ingersoll was not a politician. He did not even belong to a party, in the usual sense,—that of being a subservient mouth-piece. He said:—

"I do not believe in being the slave or serf or servant of a party. Go with it if it is going your road, and when the road forks, take the one that leads to the place you wish to visit, no matter whether the party goes that way or not. I do not believe in belonging to a party or being the property of any organization. I do not believe in giving a mortgage on yourself or a deed of trust for any purpose whatever." (viii 568)

Again:—

"I go with the party that is traveling my way. I do not pretend to belong to anything or that anything belongs to me. When a party goes my way I go with that party and I stick to it as long as it is traveling my road." (ix 578)

In other words, Ingersoll in politics, like Ingersoll elsewhere, was absolutely true to himself. During the long period of his service for the party that most nearly represented his political principles he never for a moment lost his independence. He kept the spiked collar off his neck, the tweezers off his tongue, and, spurning the politicians' gold, oftentimes ill-gotten, he preserved the perfect veracity of his soul. Although he usually contributed to the sums out of which smaller men were paid for speeches, not one penny ever found its way from a campaign fund to the pocket of Robert G. Ingersoll. Moreover, he invariably paid his own expenses. He used to say to the political managers "All I want from you is information as to where and when I can do the most good; and I will be on hand at the specified hour."

Such manifestations of individuality,—such extraordinary fidelity to principle and conscience,—would alone have titled him patriot, in the highest and noblest sense; but, as previously indicated, it is far from being his only claim upon our memory as a patriot. Indeed, (to summarize) his fearless denunciation of slavery, the Dred Scott decision and the Fugitive Slave Law, while a Democratic candidate for Congress, in 1860; his masterful rallying of the local Democracy of Peoria to the support of Lincoln, as against the Confederacy; his support of Lincoln and the Union with his sword, during a part of the three succeeding years



## *SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE*

his refusal to sell his mental manhood for the governorship of Illinois, in 1868; his eager response to the call to battle in subsequent years, whenever and wherever he saw in peril the political principles upon which depended, in his opinion, the safety and welfare of the Republic; and his clear-visioned appreciation of the latter's meaning and mission, and of the position it occupies in relation to the other nations of the earth, not only demonstrate that he was one of the greatest of patriots, but afford a reasonable and logical foundation for the conviction, that, had it not been for the prejudice of the masses, he would have become in practice, as he already was in theory, one of the greatest of statesmen.

Manifesting, even in youth, the most characteristic American traits, and placed, during that period, in an environment constantly agitated with questions of the gravest import,—questions which awakened, among the masses, far wider and profounder concern than do any similar ones of the present day,—it was inevitable that he should become interested in politics at an early age. However, his noteworthy labors therein did not begin until he was about twenty-seven years old, when, in 1860, as previously stated, he was a candidate for Congress. It was in his own local campaign of that year, as a Democrat, that he laid the foundations of the oratorical fame which he subsequently achieved in one of the national conventions, and

which he so admirably maintained in several national campaigns, of the Republican party. Long before the close of the Civil War, his advice and oratorical services were in urgent political request. Nor were they but twice withheld. Even when treachery and ingratitude, in fullest measure were his lot, they were given with a cheerfulness that was heroic—given, not to men, not to a party, but given for the triumph of principles on which depended, in his opinion, the welfare of the Republic.

Beginning with the second campaign of Lincoln in 1864, and excepting two, he participated in every Republican national campaign that was held during a period of thirty-two years, his service ending, as before stated, with the campaign of McKinley, in 1896.

And, first viewing it quantitatively, what a vast amount of work he performed! In the Hayes campaign, for example, entering the field unusually early, he delivered two or three addresses on at least every third day until the election. And his addresses, instead of the fifteen-minute conversational sort now in vogue, were from two to three hours in length. Moreover, they were supplemented by numerous private interviews; for, wherever he went, he was beset by local politicians and members of the press, eager for a personal word. Of the twelve volumes comprised in his works, the single volume containing such of his political utterances as have been permanently preserved gives but a meagre

## *SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE*

idea of the extent of his labors in the field concerned.

And, next viewing those labors qualitatively (whether or not we accept any or all of his political principles), how shall we find words to do him even simple justice? We may say that he possessed every conceivable excellence of the great popular orator; but this conveys no adequate meaning to those who are not personally familiar with his power and charm, and who are imperfectly familiar with the written accounts and oral traditions of his eloquence. We may state, on the best of authority,<sup>1</sup> that, when he was only twenty-seven years of age, or in 1860, he actually drew to himself, at an "overflow" meeting, in Chicago, the greater part of an audience which Stephen A. Douglas was addressing near by, and that, thirty-six years later, or in 1896, in the same city, he held, for over two hours, as though it were entranced, an audience of twenty thousand people which, a few nights before, had completely disconcerted and discomfited two veteran Republican orators whose names are familiar on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>2</sup> But even this account seems inadequate to convey an impression of his powers. Possessing, as I have stated, every conceivable oratorical excellence, there was, in the largest and most heterogeneous assembly, no mental or temperamental element whose interest he could not arouse and hold. This may be best real-

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<sup>1</sup> The late Phillip Hoyne, Esq., of Chicago, who was a warm personal friend of Douglas.

<sup>2</sup> Related by a gentleman who accompanied Ingersoll to the meeting.

ized by observing how widely divergent in him the two poles of expressional genius. He was the most florid and imaginative orator that ever uttered English speech, and, at the same time, he was the most practical. He had the simplicity of expression that is born of profundity of thought. His mind was as deep as the sea, but as clear as the sky. His sentences were crystallized light. He was eminently the teacher of the masses. Farmers, mechanics, laborers, used to say, on hearing his explanation of a political or an economic question: "Well, I understand that *now*." He simply could not be misunderstood.

His influence on the electorate was believed to be exactly commensurate with the extent of his oratorical efforts. That he was a vote-winner was the opinion of the political managers. They used to make some desperate appeals to him from "dead-end" sections. I quote one of those appeals, a telegram, without its date and signature: "For God's sake come here and pull us out. You are the only one on earth who can do it." During the campaign of 1896, the Chicago *Inter-Ocean*, in the course of a lengthy editorial appreciation of Ingersoll's general career, remarked: "*The Tribune* truly and pertinently says, that, 'If Colonel Ingersoll had the physical strength he had at thirty, and could be turned loose in the doubtful districts of the West, he would win a wide swath of conversions as far as his voice could reach. He is the inimitable American orator

our time.' " When we consider the number and the source of similar expressions, and how near he came, in 1876, to making Blaine the next president, we are inclined to infer something more than coincidence from the fact that in the only two campaigns in which Ingersoll took no part, namely, those of Blaine and Harrison, in 1884 and 1892, respectively, the Republican party was defeated. And, even ignoring this as being too problematical, we are still confident that there was not in Ingersoll's day, among professional politicians themselves, a man whose political judgment and services were more highly valued than his; and that, all in all, he was (to be necessarily paradoxical) the most potent and interesting extra-political individuality which the political history of his country reveals.

## 2.—IN THE LAW.

As stated in Chapter II, Ingersoll commenced the practice of law in his twenty-second year, or in 1855, and continued its practice until 1899,—a period of forty-four years. He was admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of the United States on February 2, 1865, during the term beginning in December, 1864, and, as indicated in Chapter IV, was attorney-general of Illinois from February 28, 1867, to January 11, 1869. Before the court just mentioned, he appeared in numerous

oral arguments, not one of which, as far as known, was ever reduced to print or writing.<sup>1</sup>

As a counselor and advocate, Ingersoll was among the very first of his time, the equal of the very first of any other time—as great and formidable a warrior as ever fought for justice beneath the ægis of the law. It was not what he learned, rote from text-books, decisions, reports, and so forth that made him a great counselor. An individual can no more learn to be a truly great legal adviser than he or she can learn to be a truly great inventor, metaphysician, wit, musical conductor, or poet. The seeds of genius are in the mental soil at birth, and unfavorable indeed must be the conditions if they do not fill the air with fragrance, the land with fruitage. As in the other departments in which he was supreme, it is doubtful that in the law Ingersoll ever deliberately learned more than a small fraction of what he knew. Individuals of genius learn details; individuals of genius know principles, universals. Ingersoll knew law from the start. He thought law. He possessed that ethical instinct and insight, that innate sense of equity and justice, that unerring and implacable logic which are its very foundations. It is said that he never erred in his judgment of the common law.

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<sup>1</sup> "A perfect wonder of eloquence and power, he made a speech before the Supreme Court in Washington last winter which was an alate whirlwind, and carried away in its resistless current even an august bench."—Judge Jeremiah S. Black, ex-attorney-general, in *Philadelphia Times*.

## SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE

it was because the latter, in some minor respect, failed to square with his sense of justice.

"When I have a difficult case to consider," he once stated, "I first make up my mind as to what the law *ought* to be, and then I go in search of that law, and rarely fail to find it."

"Every student of Colonel Ingersoll felt his extraordinary gifts as a lawyer," writes *Octave Thanet* (Miss Alice French), whose brother studied law in Ingersoll's office. "'He was a great lawyer,' said my brother. 'He had a most remarkable power to go straight to the principles of things. Often he would say to me: 'Now, the law used to be so and so; and the reasons for it were so and so; but the reasons have changed, and now they are so and so; and therefore the law should have changed also—French, you look up the decisions!' So I would look up the decisions—and find them.'"

Ingersoll's quickness "in grasping the salient points of a case," writes another of his intimate associates, "was equally remarkable. For example, Colonel Ingersoll and a lawyer who was and is one of the leaders of the New York bar, met at the office of a New York banker to consult about a complicated and important legal matter in which the banker was interested. The matter was new to the Colonel. He listened for a while to the statement of the case, asked a number of questions, and then suddenly announced that he understood

it all, and stated his opinion regarding it. was followed by putting on his hat and walking out. The lawyer associated with him regarded with surprise, and when he had gone said he could not pass on such a complicated and important matter in any such off-hand way. He must have to study it. Yet when he did arrive at a conclusion he was obliged to agree with the Colonel in every particular. Stories of this kind regarding Ingersoll might be multiplied indefinitely." <sup>1</sup>

And even the extraordinary qualifications thus mentioned did not surpass his faithfulness to clients. Once satisfied that a client was in the right, Ingersoll's latter's cause, his innermost feelings, were Ingersoll's own. Instantly he stood in his client's position—robed in the mantle of sympathy. Ingersoll the counselor and advocate could put himself as absolutely in place of the client as Ingersoll the humanitarian could put himself in place of the outcast—as absolutely as grand old *Lea* the heath put himself in place of the 'poor niggers' or wretches that bide the pelting of the pitiless stars. Or, again, like Whitman, Ingersoll could say

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<sup>1</sup> *Ingersoll the Man*, a pamphlet, by Clarence S. Brown, p. 7.

He was the recipient of many compliments at the hands of eminent jurists. For example, Judge Sidney Breeze, of Peoria, one of the brilliant lawyers of Illinois, frequently invited Ingersoll to occupy the bench with him; Judge Drummond, of Chicago, did the same in Washington, one of the justices of the Supreme Court, upon "handing down" his opinions, often requested Ingersoll's views thereon.





1877  
(Æt. 44)

From a photograph by Houseworth, San Francisco.



## *SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE*

in the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs." Or: "Judge not as the judge judges, but as the sun falling upon a helpless thing."

A case once rightly in his thoughts, never left them day or night, until he saw the end,—until his client either received the palm of victory, or was shrouded in the rayless gloom of defeat. There was no possible source of information from which Rogers did not draw. No stone was left unturned. Did the case require historical, genealogical, mechanical, chemical, medical, or bacteriological research, he made the research. To apply in this connection a saying which he applied in another, the case "was in his head all day and in his heart all night." Especially is this true of the early days of his forensic career, when many of his cases were of the "criminal" sort. And in later years it was perhaps the chief reason why his practice was confined to cases of a "civil" nature, in which other considerations than human sympathy play the leading rôle. The tragedy and pathos of criminal practice weighed heavily upon him.

In the selection of a jury, in the examination of witnesses, in objections to the court, in short, from beginning to end in the management of a case, he was "the soul of courtesy." What is particularly remarkable, he would not quarrel with opposing counsel; and as opposing counsel very quickly learned not to quarrel with him, the trials in which he took part were generally models of order and

decorum. He was alert, tactful, resourceful, original, unique. No one ever knew what was "coming next." It may be safely said that there were two wise rules for the guidance of his opponents: first, do not become his opponent; second, having unfortunately become such, let him be unmolested, as far as exigencies permit.

Nor does our enumeration, even thus far, include all of his splendid qualifications as a lawyer. Passing hastily over at least one of the most important of them,—mastery of the foundations and intricacies of the law,—there remains to be considered another of his qualifications which alone would have placed him among the very first of his profession in any age. That there was nothing within the realm of possibility which he could not accomplish with a jury is well known. Himself the most human of men, he understood, as clearly and fully as lawyer ever did, the capacities, susceptibilities, weaknesses, prejudices, and predilections of his kind. As the sculptor knows his mass of clay, so Ingersoll knew his fellow-beings; and over those masses of animate clay, his power was even more nearly absolute than the sculptor's over his. Ingersoll could make his clay laugh and weep and reason,—reason in his own way: the sculptor can only make his clay seem to do these things. And of the two, Ingersoll manifested the more composite genius. With a personality magnetically irresistible; overflowing with good nature,—enjoying

every pulse and breath; frank and candid; all but fallible in memory; lightning itself at repartee, but never wounding unless compelled, and then instantly ready with the balm of humor; saying just the right thing at the right time, and nothing at the wrong time; eloquent on even the commonplace,—sublime on the sublime; able to clarify at once the roiliest problem,—to put the complex and intricate in words that even a child not only could, but must, understand—with all these attributes and powers, he was the most impressive and convincing advocate that ever appealed to the heart and brain of an American jury.

As tending to support this claim, the following account of his conduct of a case at Metamora, Ill., during his early forensic career, is of typical interest. Two farmers had quarreled concerning a boundary-line, and one had killed the other with a paddle. Ingersoll was counsel for the accused. Instead of bringing the latter's wife and children into court, as another advocate probably would have done, Ingersoll chose to rely wholly upon his own unaided influence with the jury. He presented his case from the standpoint of the evidence and of the law, and then—he painted a picture with words,—a picture of a lowly cottage, at twilight. The wife and children were standing at the little gate,—the children wondering why papa was so late,—the wife peering into the dimming distance for him who was still the one of all the world. And with the last

touch to the pathetic scene, the lawyer-poet suddenly said to the jury:—

"Now, gentlemen, are you going to let this man go home?"

"Yes, 'Bob,' we are!" came the sobbing answer from the burly foreman; and "Bob" dropped into a seat as though he himself had been shot.

We must not here overlook a fact which reflects still more to his individual greatness: In the courtroom he always labored at a disadvantage that no other eminent American lawyer experienced—the disadvantage of religious prejudice.<sup>1</sup> And what other disadvantage could have been greater? Can it be imagined that there was a community which could have furnished, in the usual course, twelve men of whom one or more would not be prejudiced against Ingersoll because of religious belief? Can it be imagined that in another lawyer precisely the same powers which Ingersoll possessed would not have had far greater effect upon the average jury? We who have long observed the general tendency to withhold his rightful dues know that it can not. How much higher, then, than we otherwise would must we, in simple justice, rate his abilities as a legal advocate?

May we not extend our inquiries even further? Is it not doubtful, taking into consideration all of the requisites of the really great *counselor and ad-*

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<sup>1</sup> A distinguished lawyer once publicly taunted Ingersoll by reference to this fact.

ocate, that another as great as Ingersoll ever practiced at the American bar? What other American as combined, in as full and rounded measure, the many necessary qualities and attributes? Let us be candid,—reasonable. In what type of man should we naturally look, not for a great, but for the greatest, counselor and advocate? Should we look to one who was profound in law, but who was not an orator? Should we look to one who was an orator, but who was superficial in law? Should we look to one who, in the law, trusted in the reasonable, the natural, the probable, and who was an orator, but who, outside the law, trusted in the unreasonable, the supernatural, the improbable? "Assuredly not," will be your reply to all of these questions. "We should look to him who was intellectually free; who possessed the widest horizon; who had the most perfect sense of justice; who was the greatest logician; who relied absolutely upon reason, observation, and experience,—upon the reasonable, the natural, the probable,—not only in law, but in every possible department of mental effort, and who was a great orator,—one who could set his thoughts to verbal music that would enrapture, enthrall, convince." Then you would turn, were he still among us, to Robert G. Ingersoll.

In making this statement, I am unmindful neither of his possible limitations nor of others' excellencies. Let us see. There was one other American who was perhaps as versatile,—as "many-sided,"—as

Ingersoll, but he was neither lawyer nor orator. There was another American who was a great orator (as great as he could be without having been born a poet) and a great lawyer (as great as he could be without a perfect sense of justice), but he was not a universal logician; he believed in the supernatural; he defended the Fugitive Slave Law. There was yet another American who was profound in law, and profound in justice and mercy, but he was not particularly versatile; he was not free from superstition; and he was not a great orator. Still others were profound in law, but they were not great orators; their mental horizon was narrow; they were believers in superstition.

"I once told an eminent jurist," says Haeckel, "that the tiny spherical ovum from which every man is developed is as truly endowed with life as the embryo of two, or seven, or even nine months; he laughed incredulously."<sup>1</sup> More than one of America's great lawyers would have done the same. But Ingersoll? Would he have laughed at a biological truth with which not only the scientist, but every intelligent layman, ought to be perfectly familiar? The answer is that Ingersoll was as conversant with this very Haeckel, with the principal facts, phenomena, and laws of biology, "from moner to man," as he was with the common law itself. Into the lap of his intellect, Humboldt,

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<sup>1</sup> *The Riddle of the Universe*, p. 7.



arwin, and Wallace, Huxley, Tyndall, and Helmholtz, had emptied their glittering treasures. Indeed, this list might properly include the name of every savant from Haeckel back to Bacon. In philosophy, he had ranged from Socrates to Spencer. In literature, the characters of Shakespeare, Dickens, Balzac, Hugo, and many others were as familiar to him as the members of his own household. There was not in English a great poem, whether in prose or verse, that did not linger in his heart to polish anon his native graces with its ennobling influence; and in the gallery of his memory, the marbles of the Greeks,—pathetic even in their original completeness,—pointed with double pathos their mutilated arms toward the remnants of a once powerful and tyrannical, but now fast weakening superstition, in the presence of which he had ever stood whole-souled, sane, and free.

Nor have we even yet exhausted the list of attributes and accomplishments that Ingersoll made auxiliary to his extraordinary qualifications as a counselor and advocate. He was familiar with all the mental paths that man had traveled—from midnight to dawn—from dawn to noon. He understood the inscriptions on all the mile-posts along the way—the victories and achievements.

His scope and perception were astounding. He had been known to puzzle mechanics, inventors, navigators, with questions in their own specialties, and then vex them by answering his own questions,

after they had failed to do so. He could criticize a novel, a play, a painting,<sup>1</sup> a poem, as masterfully as he could a legal brief, a political platform, or a theological creed; and, as indicated in Chapter IX, his knowledge and appreciation of music would have done credit to many a professional musician.

It may be that perfect freedom of thought and encyclopedic knowledge are negligible factors in estimating forensic capabilities. It may be that familiarity with the truths of science; that the intellectual capacity essential to comprehension of the great systems of philosophy; that the insight into human nature imparted by Shakespeare and the great novelists; and that the subtlety, profundity, and sublimity of thought and feeling involved in understanding and appreciating the greatest poetry and the greatest music—it may be that all these can add nothing to the qualifications of the counselor and advocate. But if they can, then I unhesitatingly declare that such versatility as I have indicated, added to the eminent forensic

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<sup>1</sup> In company with a number of others, Ingersoll was visiting a collection of paintings.

"I think this is a copy," he remarked, referring to a particular picture.

"Oh no," replied the person in charge of the collection, "they are all originals."

"Well," rejoined Ingersoll, "this painting has a sort of cramped effect which no original would have, I think."

The person in charge still insisted that all of the pictures were originals. But not long afterwards, it was ascertained that the painting was, in fact, a copy—a copy by the original artist, I think.

ilities which I have also indicated, and which everybody admits that he possessed, must necessarily place Ingersoll, the capacities of all alike considered, at the head of American lawyers.

Of the many hundreds of cases that he tried, during the forty-four years of his legal career, none have been specifically mentioned in the present chapter, and only five were mentioned in previous chapters—the Munn trial, the “Star-Route” trials, the Reynolds blasphemy trial, the Davis case, and the Russell will case. To these should be added the Canmer case, and that of the Bankers’ and Merchants’ Telegraph Company against the Western Union Telegraph Company, in which Ingersoll secured a verdict of \$1,500,000. These cases were and are mentioned, obviously not because the labor which they involved was necessarily greater than that of many others of which the general public scarcely heard, but because of their interest and magnitude in the eyes of that public.

Of Ingersoll’s practice before the courts of the different states, before various United States circuit courts, and before the United States Supreme Court, I shall attempt no details. Nor shall I specially note more of the generous compliments that were extended to him by both the bench and the bar, from ocean to ocean, from north to south. Such an array of particulars is essential to my present object—a general indication of his abilities

and achievements in the law. For it is already apparent that in this, the more important of his avocations, his abilities were extraordinary, his achievements monumental; that, all relevant things considered, he was the most conspicuous figure of his century.

### 3.—IN THE FIELD OF RATIONALISM.

It will have been observed, that I have thus far given no very definite indication of the period or periods covered by Ingersoll's anti-theological propaganda, and no sort of indication of its geographic scope. And it will doubtless be agreed, that, in so far as I have failed to do this, I have failed to do justice, not only to his physicomental powers, but to the zeal, enthusiasm, and aggressiveness with which he consecrated his life to the cause of physical and intellectual liberty.

In contemplating the work of Ingersoll, we must exclude the mere thinker and the mere writer. It is something, no doubt, to sit in the secluded luxury of the study,—in the gracious ease of the arm-chair,—and think that Christendom is wrong. It is something more, under the same conditions, to put one's thoughts into magnificent discourses to be read in the luxury of other studies,—in the ease of other arm-chairs. But it is far greater still to go out into a stolid and insolent world,—into "the byways and hedges,"—month after month,

## SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE

year after year, decade after decade, and *tell Christendom that it is wrong*—*tell Christendom that it is wrong*, and lay, in scornful defiance, upon the altars of Ignorance, Bigotry, and Hypocrisy, the holy offerings of honest conviction. And this, in brief, is the life of Robert G. Ingersoll. For more than forty years, with all his might, he battled in every direction and quarter for the universal liberty of mankind. Of course, not all of this period was devoted to fighting the beleaguering hosts of superstition. But when, in his earlier days, he was not fighting both mental and physical slavery with his tongue, he was fighting physical slavery with his sword—fighting those who would substitute for the Great Republic,—that radiant hope and glory of mankind,—an autocracy of slavery. And when, after physical slavery was dead, he was from any cause unable to fight mental slavery with his tongue, he used his pen.

As already stated, Ingersoll delivered his first public anti-theological discourse when he was twenty-three years old, or in 1856. His career as a rationalistic reformer may therefore be said to have begun in that year: it ended in 1899,—a period of forty-three years. From 1856 to 1860, few if any rationalistic discourses were delivered. In the latter year, as stated in Chapter III, he delivered *Progress*, the first of his anti-theological lectures of which any authentic report has been preserved. He did not again lecture until 1864,

when *Progress* was repeated. His next lecture was delivered in 1869. After that year, he lectured continually, excepting from 1885 to 1890, when the condition of his throat would not permit.

"After he fairly had started on his agnostic career, fanatics commenced to threaten his life. Many a time he mounted the platform with a letter in his pocket stating that he would never live to finish his address."<sup>1</sup> Such letters were usually written in red ink and signed, "A Lover of Jesus," "A Friend of the Lord," or with some other *nom de plume* of like import. Typical of these communications was one delivered by special postal delivery, in Chicago, to the secretary of Ingersoll, just before the latter began his lecture. It read, in substance: "If you go on the platform to-night and speak against the Bible, you will not live to see your wife and children again." Although this letter was not delivered to the addressee until after the conclusion of his lecture, and would have had no more effect in changing the course of events had it been delivered before than had the many others of its kind, it represented one of those threats which, one would think, were not to be despised. "Nothing is so blind and cruel as religious fanaticism. The spirit that lighted the fire around Servetus, that deluged Paris with blood on St. Bartholomew's Day, that devastated Germany in the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ingersoll the Man*, a pamphlet, by Clarence S. Brown, p. 9.

erty Years' War, that caused the unspeakable horrors of the inquisition—something of that spirit lingers to-day. More than one half-crazed man would have imagined that it was doing God's will by striking down this Antichrist, and that eternity of bliss would open for it for performing such an act." In support of this, it may be said that one man has voluntarily stated that he had attended a lecture resolved and prepared to fight Ingersoll, but that, when he came under the influence of the latter's voice and personality, he was unable to consummate his dastardly purpose. This would seem to confirm, in a measure at least, the assertion of one who knew Ingersoll intimately, that mere association for any length of time with the great humanitarian would have transformed even a criminal into a model citizen.

As to the number and character of the anonymous correspondents previously mentioned, we may further judge by the following extract from an interview published in the *Chicago Times* of May 1881:—

Yes: I get a great many anonymous letters—some letters in which I am asked to strike me dead, others of an exceedingly insulting character, others almost idiotic, others exceedingly malicious, and others insane, others written in an exceedingly good spirit, winding up with the information that I must certainly be damned. Others express wonder that God allowed me to live at all, and that, having made a mistake, he does not instantly correct it by killing me. Others

prophecy that I will yet be a minister of the gospel; but, as there has never been any softening of the brain in our family, I imagine that the prophecy will never be fulfilled. Lately, on opening a letter and seeing that it is upon this subject, and without a signature, I throw it aside without reading. I have so often found them to be grossly ignorant, insulting and malicious, that as a rule I read them no more." (viii 99)

But, to return to the threats, Ingersoll cared precisely the same for any fanatic violence that might spring from orthodoxy as he did for orthodoxy itself: he treated both with that disdainful and scornful defiance which, in his estimation, their despicableness deserved. His purpose and resolution were never tempered by the thought of deviation. "As long as the smallest coal is red in hell," he said, in 1884, "I am going to keep on." He asked and gave no quarter; and he recognized no flag but the flag of surrender.

During the forty-three years of his anti-theological crusade, he lectured in every town and city of any considerable size and importance in every state and territory of the United States, except North Carolina, Mississippi, Indian Territory, and Oklahoma, and in many towns and cities in Canada. And in nearly all these places, he lectured not once, but many times, and in some of the larger places, not only many times during his career, but two or three times every season. Year after year, he returned; year after year, the size, intelligence, and enthusiasm of his audiences increased. He had ten eager, sympathetic listeners in 1899 to one in 1860. The entire theological subsoil of North



merica was honeycombed by his eloquent aggressiveness—converted into vast catacombs for the orthodox dead. His repertoire was always new, changing, inexhaustible. Of the nearly thirty different lectures which he wrote, there was, in effect, a new one for every audience. Thus, on a lecture-tour in one season, he would deliver at A, *The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child*; at B, *Some Mistakes of Moses*; at C, *Why I Am An agnostic*, etc. The next season, with the same itinerary, the order of delivery would be reversed, all of the lectures would be different. Verily could it have been said of him: "Age cannot wither, nor custom stale," his "infinite variety." Learned "pulpit orators" might be talking to air the pews, their churches garish with placards "sociables," "bazaars," and amateur theatricals; at Ingersoll, in the veriest "city of churches," on brief notice (hardly noticeable), would fill the largest theater, from the first row of the orchestra, the last row in "the gallery of the gods." And he could fill the same theater, on the same subject, whenever he chose to return. Indeed, a large majority of his audience would have had him return on the following day. For, from opening to close, his discourse never palled; his hearers were never cloyed. Instead, they were impatient for a wider and deeper view of that new world of love and liberty of which he had opened before their blinded eyes an enchanting and inspiring vista.

To oratory born—filling the stage like “an antique god”; graceful as a willow when zephyrs stir the languid air; his face as perfect a mirror of his thoughts as the stream over which the willow bends is a perfect mirror of all that is above; with wit like lightning, humor as kindly as autumn, logic as cold as winter; with the directness of light, the candor of day, the pathos of twilight—a master of verbal melody—he lingered in the memory of auditors like a faultless production of *Die Walküre* or of *Hamlet*.

How amply this general representation is warranted by the concrete facts of Ingersoll's anti-theological career may be seen in such accounts as follow.

The first is from *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* of May 10, 1880:—

“Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll lectured last night at Pike's Opera-House on his new theme of ‘What Must We Do To Be Saved?’ His vanity must have been touched by the flattering reception which met him. Seldom has such a large and intelligent audience been crowded into the four walls of the house as were there when Colonel Ingersoll stepped upon the stage. Parquet, dress-circle, gallery, balcony, stalls, boxes, aisles, lobbies, and stairways were filled with entranced listeners, while even the stage was utilized to seat some of the hearers. The lecture, which lasted over two hours, was listened to with charmed ears and greeted, from time to time, with sincere applause, loud laughter, and cheers of approbation. It was an audience *en rapport* with the speaker and the doctrines he advanced. To attempt a report of such a lecture *verbatim* would be to fill columns with words which, coming from other than Mr. Ingersoll's flowery lips, accompanied by the embellishment of his charmed presence, would be stripped of more than half their force.

## SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE

"The lecturer came upon the stage without introduction. He needed none, for few of his hearers had never seen him before. Most of them were there, not out of curiosity to hear and see a man they had heard of, but to hear a man whose eloquence had charmed them on a former occasion. There is that to be said to recommend Colonel Ingersoll as a lecturer. If he once succeeds in securing an audience, he is sure of it on any future occasion."

From the Milwaukee *Evening Wisconsin* :—

" \* \* \* \* He is a born orator. Of fine physical proportions, graceful carriage, possessing a large and finely moulded head, an expressive countenance, and genial smile, a voice of great compass, and lungs and throat that seem incapable of failure under the severest strain, his audience receives a favorable impression from the moment that he steps to the front of the rostrum, and utters his first sentence. This impression is deepened by the unobstructed flow of language, his fine intonation, his graceful, yet emphatic, gestures, his vigorous sentences—now sparkling with humor, now loaded with stinging sarcasm or terrible denunciation, and now unfolding into the most splendid imagery. He seems never to lack a word, or a simile, but the volume of his discourse flows on with such fullness, ease, and power, that one wonders it can ever stop. \* \* \* "

From the Boston *Herald* of Monday April 19, 1880 :—

"When the Boston Theatre is enlarged, it will be able to contain a greater audience than that which assembled within its walls last evening—not before. The announcement that Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll was to lecture caused so great a rush for seats that all the desirable sittings were taken two or three days in advance of the appointed time; and when the rotund figure and jolly countenance of the orator appeared upon the stage, last evening, and stepped forward to the reading desk at the footlights, he was greeted by an audience that not only filled every seat in the vast auditorium, even to the upper gallery, but overflowed into the aisles and doorways and thronged the lobbies. There were over three thousand people present. It was an audience, too, which any speaker might be proud to address,

for it was composed of ladies and gentlemen whose bearing was that of intelligence and refinement, and who, as far as outward appearance would indicate, were fully on a level with the church-goers of this city."

The impression made in the midst of New England culture was repeated in the western mining town, as this extract from *Territorial Enterprise*, Virginia City, Nev., will show :—

"An overflowing house received Col. Ingersoll, at National Guard Hall, last evening, and hung entranced upon his words, from the commencement to the close of his incomparable lecture. Of that lecture, we can speak only in general terms to-day. It is a wonderful production. All the beauties of the language; all the enchantment of eloquence; all the splendors of imagination, the plays of wit, the eccentricities of a subtle genius, are handled in it. His appeals for liberty to man; for liberty and protection to woman; for liberty, protection, and kindness to children, are as beautiful as anything in our language. This might be extended over columns, but it is enough to say that the lecture is charming throughout, and that its teachings are pure and true."

These reportorial items,—quoted as being only fairly representative of the thousands that are available,—might be supplemented with the accounts of many men and women of national and international fame. Thus Elizabeth Cady Stanton, after declaring that "the future historian will rank Robert G. Ingersoll peerless among the great and good men of the nineteenth century," relates, in the course of her tribute, the following :—

"I heard Mr. Ingersoll many years ago in Chicago. The hall seated 5,000 people; every inch of standing-room was also occupied;

## SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE

aisles and platform crowded to overflowing. He held that vast audience for three hours so completely entranced that when he left the platform no one moved, until suddenly, with loud cheers and applause, they recalled him. He returned smiling and said: 'I'm glad you called me back, as I have something more to say. Can you stand another half-hour?' 'Yes: an hour, two hours, all night,' was shouted from various parts of the house; and he talked on until midnight, with unabated vigor, to the delight of his audience. This was the greatest triumph of oratory I had ever witnessed. It was the first time he delivered his matchless speech [lecture], 'The Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child.'"

And Mrs. Stanton continues:—

"I have heard the greatest orators of this century in England and America; O'Connell in his palmyest days, on the Home Rule question; Gladstone and John Bright in the House of Commons; Spurgeon, James and Stopford Brooks, in their respective pulpits; our own Wendell Phillips, Henry Ward Beecher, and Webster and Clay, on great occasions; the stirring eloquence of our anti-slavery orators, both in Congress and on the platform, but none of them ever equalled Robert Ingersoll in his highest flights."

So, too, Dr. Conway, in *My Pilgrimage to the Wise Men of the East* (p. 19), names Ingersoll as "the most striking figure in religious America," and gives, among other things, the following personal impression:—

"In 1881, being on a visit to Boston, my wife and I found ourselves in the Parker House with the Ingersolls, and went over to Charlestown to hear him lecture. His subject was 'Some Mistakes of Moses,' and it was a memorable experience. Our lost leaders,—Emerson, Thoreau, Theodore Parker,—who had really spoken to disciples rather than to the nation, seemed to have contributed something to form this organ by which their voice could reach the people. Every variety of power was in this orator,—logic and poetry, humor and imagination, simplicity and dramatic art, moral earnestness and boundless sym-

pathy. The wonderful power which Washington's attorney-general, Edmund Randolph, ascribed to Thomas Paine of insinuating his ideas equally into learned and unlearned had passed from Paine's pen to Ingersoll's tongue. The effect on the people was indescribable. The large theatre was crowded from pit to dome. The people were carried from plaudits of his argument to loud laughter at his humorous sentences, and his flexible voice carried the sympathies of the assembly with it, at times moving them to tears by his pathos."

"The country," observes Dr. Conway, "was full of incidents and anecdotes relating to these marvellous lectures"; and he adds, later: "I knew that he was leading an insurrection of human hearts against the inhumanities of the Bible and the cruelties of dogmatic propagandism."

A few sentences from the tribute of Mr. Debbs, the eminent Socialist (who is, of course, fundamentally opposed to the economic views which Ingersoll represented), may well be included here:—

"The name of Robert G. Ingersoll is in the pantheon of the world. More than any other man who ever lived he destroyed religious superstition. \* \* \* He was the Shakespeare of oratory—the greatest that the world has ever known. Ingersoll lived and died far in advance of his time. He wrought nobly for the transformation of this world into a habitable globe; and long after the last echo of detraction has been silenced, his name will be loved and honored, and his fame will shine resplendent, for his immortality is fixed and glorious."

That no other orator or speaker of the nineteenth century addressed as many people as Ingersoll is very probable. That none other uniformly made such deep and lasting impressions is more than probable—it is historically certain. It is quite un-

likely that any notable percentage of such of his hearers as were previously orthodox departed from him with their theological views unchanged.

I would here revert, with emphasis, to one fact: It was not as a rationalistic propagandist that Ingersoll first became generally known. It was as a patriot—as one who loved his country, not because it was his country, but because he loved liberty. It was as a lawyer who had gained a brilliant reputation as a defender of those threatened with injustice. It was as a hard-headed and trusted political adviser, and, preeminently, as an orator with lips “breathing eloquence, that might have soothed a tiger’s rage, or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.”

Wherever he chose to go, his reputation preceded and assured him of respectful and interested attention. In national and social questions, he was the guiding-star of great numbers of his fellow-citizens; and consequently, when he decided publicly to break the fetters and the idols of tradition, he obtained a far more extensive and honorable hearing than he would have obtained had he first appeared solely as an opponent of “revealed” religion.

Still, it was charged by some that he was not profound; but I have observed that the charge was invariably made by superficial people. As a matter of fact, with all his wit, humor, raillery, persiflage, he was the profoundest logician that ever appealed to the intellect of an American audience. There

was logic even in his laughter. He passed the cup of mirth, and in its sparkling foam were found the gems of unanswerable truth.

Ingersoll's auditors realized, as never before, that they were being addressed by a *man* ! To see him was to believe that he was sincere, to hear him was to know it, to understand him was to be convinced that he was right.

Nor was it due entirely to his own attributes and efforts that he reached and swayed so many minds: opponents gave a helping hand. Whenever he delivered lectures or published religious or sociological opinions which were particularly objectionable to the orthodox, the newspapers, as we have seen, were filled with "answers." To some of them he replied. Many thousands who probably would not otherwise have heard of the problems at issue thus learned of their existence. Sometimes the good people of the blue-law states refused to rent him a theater, removed his lithographs from the billboards, or threatened him with arrest for "blasphemy." Overcrowded houses and copious reports of his sayings were the invariable result. And of course "the poor little ministers" preached. If they only could have realized that theology is not to be affirmed by reason, what energy they would have conserved ! and how they would have curtailed the influence of their foe !

Another significant fact must be considered here: Ingersoll made science his handmaid. To be sure,



## SUMMARY OF HIS LIFE-WORK AND INFLUENCE

he was not a scientist, experimentally, but he was wonderfully familiar with others' discoveries, as we have previously noted; and he could describe them better than could the discoverers. He popularized the work of the great masters, and championed the masters themselves. Every scientist worthy to hold aloft the sacred torch will also hold in tender reverence the memory of Robert G. Ingersoll. Many thousands first heard the names of Humboldt, Tyndall, Helmholtz, Darwin, Huxley, Haeckel, and others from his ardent lips. And he reached a far more heterogeneous class than those authors could ever reach through their works. Their legitimate audiences are small, at best. Ingersoll went out after the laity, bound them with the golden chain of his eloquence, and threw science in their faces. And they understood; for, as before stated, he was a master of simplification—preëminently the teacher of the masses. The average person got more chemistry, physics, geology, biology, from *Why I Am An Agnostic* than he could have derived in a month from technical works.

Who will say, that this dissemination of scientific and philosophical truths did not have, on the theological mind, a potent liberalizing influence? Who will deny, that, coupled with the historical method which Ingersoll employed in biblical argument, it did not sustain very important accessory, if not causal, relations to "higher criticism"? We must bear in mind that that term was unheard of

when he began his work; whereas, at its conclusion, we were constantly meeting with clerical utterances which, for all the theological bias they showed, might have been extracted from *Some Mistakes of Moses*. Marvelous the change! Principles and sentiments that were received with hisses by a vast majority of the laity, and by nearly all the clergy, when voiced in Ingersoll's first lecture, in 1860, were sanctioned and even applauded by theologians when the Great Agnostic uttered his last public word. Beginning his work when ignorance was a virtue,—when pandering hypocrisy was wont to place upon the brow of stupidity the wreath of popular sanction,—when candid speech was treated as a crime,—he lived to see in decay the vast structure of supernatural religion.

To the most conspicuous feature of this change, I would invite special attention. It will be recalled that, in a previous chapter (XIV), I quoted from Ingersoll a description of a Free Will Baptist sermon which he heard when a boy, and in which were vividly detailed the eternal tortures of the damned in hell. The impression which the sermon made upon Ingersoll will also be recalled.

When the latter began his anti-theological propaganda, the same fiendish belief in literal and everlasting hell-fire that was taught in this sermon was still practically universal. To the orthodox, hell was a glaring, scorching, roaring reality. Sermons to that effect, although lacking the lurid-

ness of the one which shocked the sensibilities of the boy Ingersoll, could be heard in a large majority of the churches. Even youth and childhood were unexempt. Little children could tell such of their playmates as chanced to have unbelieving parents all about the zealous labors of the trident-wielding, spear-tailed fiends of the underworld. In many thousands of orthodox homes, the monotonous gloom enwrapping the cradle was broken only by the glare of hell.

What a change had occurred when the great warrior fell asleep! The belief in everlasting torture,—in leering fiends,—no longer filled with horror the imagination of childhood. The cradle had been rescued; the nursery had been saved; and through the eastern windows fell warm and golden the sunlight of intelligence and freethought. Preachers had ceased to appeal to the argument of infinite revenge, and were discoursing upon "future retribution" or "conditional immortality." The text of the Free Will Baptist of Ingersoll's boyhood remained the same; the creeds still smouldered; but, in the minds of a vast majority, the orthodox hell was a remembered nightmare. As wrote the great propagandist himself, to a friend:—

"There is but little left for me to do. Jehovah is with Jove. The fires of hell have been extinguished. The struggle with superstition is nearly over. 'We have passed midnight, and the great balance weighs up morning.'"

Who had wrought this glorious change? Were the Unitarians a factor? Undoubtedly. Were the Universalists a factor? Undoubtedly. Were the Freethinkers, in general, a factor? Undoubtedly. But who was to be thanked for the existence of many of those Unitarians and Universalists, as such, and, especially, for hundreds of thousands of those Freethinkers? Who had wrought the glorious change? To this question, there is one answer, and in that answer, one word—a name that arches in seven-hued radiance the horizon of the future. It is *Ingersoll*. Of him it will be said:—

“He sought, by constant appeal to truth, reason, mental and moral integrity, physical and intellectual liberty, justice, mercy, humanity, sympathy, tenderness, love,—and, moreover, by personal example in each and all of these,—to make of earth a heaven; but it is his memory's richest reward, that he put out ‘the ignorant and revengeful fires of hell.’”

Two hundred and eighty-nine years after the world's grandest martyr crumbled to sacred ashes at the bigot's stake, the pope of Rome, with malicious eyes, his own power slowly waning, saw rise within the shadow of the Vatican a monument to Giordano Bruno.

As with the memory of that intrepid man in the land of sun and blue and mirthful vine, so shall it be in every land with the memory of Ingersoll. For, dowered with nature's noblest gifts, he left,

in turn, to all mankind, the imperishable legacy of thought and deed. Sublime as the snow-mantled mountain, vast as the sea,—the origin of his genius as little understood as their origin,—he lived and wrought and passed to silence as naturally as they exist.

Rest at last, O wondrous and unconquered soul !  
Upon thy tranquil brow fell full and fair the mellow  
gleam of humanity's golden hope. In the eternal  
right beat bravely strong thy noble heart, and to  
the dim heights where tremulous broods the pur-  
pling dawn soared the winged envoys of thy tireless  
brain. Naught but the dregs of truth could quench  
thy jeweled lips. But too soon—thou wast not  
understood ; for in the unwalled and limitless  
temple of thy mind dwelt Love and Liberty in  
perfect unreserve. Yet, trouble not. The detrac-  
tion of the present thy fame can well afford ; for  
thou art the hero,—the sage,—the saint,—of the  
better years to be. A worshiper of the ideal, thou  
didst live for posterity. Posterity will live for thee.



# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## ABSOLUTE

### A

**ABSOLUTE**, the: in morals, 147; unknown and inscrutable, 234.

**ACADEMY**: Ingersoll attends—in Ash-tabula, 27—in Greenville, 30; of Music, New York, oration in the, 117-19.

**ACCIDENT**, cosmogonic, Ingersoll not a believer in, 243-44.

**ACT**, Civil Rights, Ingersoll on the constitutionality of the, 126-27.

**CRITICISMS**, must be judged by consequences, 348 ext., 349 ext.

**WORDS**, aged, pathetic words in behalf of, 480.

**DISCOURSE**: About *Farming in Illinois*, 92; Davis will case, 154-58; *Eight to Seven*, *The*, 92-93.

**ADVOCATE**: counselor and (*See* Counselor); New York *Christian*, proposes to boycott the *Evening Telegram* for publishing *A Christmas Sermon*, 161.

**PERFECTION**, "Back of all churches is," 385 ext.

**PRO-AMERICAN CONFERENCE**, the Indiana State, resolutions of, on Ingersoll's death, 498.

**EVENING**, an autumn, a sweet way to spend, 410-11.

**AGNOSTIC**: and Agnosticism, origin and meaning of, 226-29; as applied to Ingersoll, 223-25; the attitude of the, the only tenable one, 234; "the Great," returns to the place of his baptism, 128; *Why I Am An*, Ingersoll's mental autobiography, 180-81; *Why I Am An*, scientific knowledge derived from by the laity, 541.

**AGNOSTICISM**: a Pasteur filter, 229; a principle universally applicable, 236-39; basis of, 239-34; candor the source of, 238; defined by Huxley, 228 ext.; foundation of, 229-

## ANTS

34; metaphysical basis of, 229-34; not a system or creed, 236; not infidelity, 236; not limited to theology, 236; positive as well as negative, 228, 229; relations of, to metaphysics, 230-34; why Ingersoll accepted, 234-36.

**ALABAMA CAVALRY**, the Fourth, 61.

**"ALCOHOL"**, a passage from the Munn trial address, 75-76 n.

**ALCOHOLIC**, the, moral responsibility of, 328 ext.

**ALL**, Ingersoll's belief that the universe is, 325.

**ALLEGORY**, example of, 481.

**ALLEN**, William Joshua, and Willis, 35, 36, 37.

**ALLISON**, William B., 105 n.

**ALLOWAY**, 1, 2.

**AMBASSADOR**, appointment of: to France, 94; to Germany, 93-94.

**AMERICA**: Ingersoll on criticisms of, 508; Ingersoll's faithfulness to, 507-8; its geographic amplitude etc. appreciated by Ingersoll, 504-5.

**AMERICAN**: Free Religious Association, address before, 214; the ideal, Ingersoll's conception of, 504-5; what the average believes, 390.

**AMERICANISM**, Ingersoll's, 508-9.

**ANCESTORS**: a genius should select with care, 6 ext.; "I know but little about my," 8 n.; Ingersoll knew as much of his as they of him, 6.

**ANCESTRY AND GENIUS**, 3-6.

**ANDERSON**, John, "My Jo," poem, 398.

**ANGINA PECTORIS**, the cause of Ingersoll's death, 217, 219.

**"ANNIHILATE"**, blotted from language, by science, 238-39.

**ANNIHILATION**, 244.

**"ANSWERS"** to INGERSOLL, 340.

**ANTHONY**, Susan B., 382.

**ANTICHRIST**, Ingersoll as, 531.

**ANTS**, fable of a colony of, 252 ext.

## APOLLO

- APOLLO, Baldur, and other sun-gods, in connection with Christ's origin, 265-66.
- APOLOGY, defined, 485 ext.
- APOSTROPHE: to Ingersoll, 545; to *Liberty*, 127—extract from, 505.
- ARBITRATION, to do away with war, 311, 313.
- ARGYLL, Duke of, 138.
- ARISTOCRACY OF AMERICA, "We are the," 187 ext.
- ARMY, the, Ingersoll's service in, 54-62.
- ART: in general, effect of, on the spiritual man, 310 ext.; Ingersoll's, the varied manifestations of, 458; the greatest work of, only a mental arbor, 470.
- ARTHUR, President, 118.
- ASCENSION, the, Ingersoll on, 270-71.
- ASHUTUBA, O., Ingersoll's boyhood in, 25-29.
- ASPINWALL, General, 118.
- "ASSES RIDE ON CHRIST," 210 ext.
- ASSOCIATION, the Ingersoll Monument, Peoria, 491.
- ASTRONOMER, the theological, profundity of, 206-7.
- ASYLUM, an, the charge that Ingersoll did not found, 450.
- "ATHEIST," as applied to Ingersoll, 223-25.
- ATONEMENT, the: Ingersoll on, 271-73; origin of, 271-72; wisdom and justice of, 273.
- ATTORNEY-GENERAL: of Illinois, Ingersoll refuses the nomination for, 65 —Ingersoll's service as, 63, 515; of the United States, mention of Ingersoll for, 94.
- AUDIENCE: Ingersoll addresses the greatest ever assembled in Brooklyn, 109 ext.—the largest ever drawn by one man in Chicago, 89-90 ext.; Ingersoll controls one that two other orators could not control, 513.
- AUDIENCES: Ingersoll's anti-theological, heterogeneous character of,

## BEAUTY

- 541—size, enthusiasm, character, etc., of, 532, 533, 534-40—those of 1899 compared with those of 1860, 532; Ingersoll's power over, 513-14.
- AUDITORS, Ingersoll's impression on, 534-39.
- AURORA BOREALIS, described, 483 ext.
- AUTHOR AND STYLE, likened to tree and fruit, 459-60.
- AUTOBIOGRAPHY: Ingersoll's aversion to, 6; Ingersoll's mental, 180-81; why Ingersoll did not write an, 6-7.

## B

- BANK, every, should be welcomed, 405.
- BACON, Francis: Ingersoll's familiarity with, 525; the theory of his authorship of Shakespeare, rejected, 153.
- BADNESS, absolute, 347.
- BAKER, Alfred, refuses Ingersoll the use of a hall in which to lecture for Whitman, 166-67.
- BALDWIN, Frank, 437.
- BALZAC, Honoré de, Ingersoll's familiarity with, 525.
- BANGOR, speech at, Hayes campaign, *The Whig and Courier* on, 85-86.
- BANKERS' AND MERCHANTS' TELEGRAPH COMPANY, the, against the Western Union Telegraph Company, 527.
- BAPTISM: a good thing, "with soap," 34; practised before Christ, 278.
- BAPTIST PREACHER, a, whom Ingersoll heard in boyhood, 366-68.
- BAR, the, Ingersoll and his brother admitted to, 38.
- BARNUM, General, 118.
- BARRETT, Laurence, 152, 500.
- BASIS, the philosophical, on which Ingersoll stood, chap. x, 223-55.
- BASTILLE, the, the body of Voltaire rests upon its ruins, 175.
- BEAUTIFUL, the, Ingersoll's love of, 296-97.
- BEAUTY: effect of, on Ingersoll, 202; Ingersoll's convictions clothed in, 411.



# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## BECKWITH

**BECKWITH, Philo D.:** his admiration and affection for Ingersoll, 174; plans to help those who helped him, 173; theater, memorial, erected by the family of, 173-74; tribute to, by Ingersoll, 173-74.

**BEECH Creek,** 59 n.

**BEECHER, Henry Ward:** clasps Ingersoll's hand before an audience etc., 110; compared with Ingersoll as an orator, 537 ext.; declines to reply to Ingersoll, 112; Ingersoll's tribute to, 138-39; introduces Ingersoll as "the most brilliant speaker of the English tongue," 109-11; mentioned, 500; proposes an epitaph for Ingersoll, 96.

**BEEFSTEAK,** Ingersoll's directions for broiling, 423.

**BEETHOVEN, Ludwig van:** his Sixth Symphony, a description of, 197; his Sonata in G, 194 ext.

**BELIEFS:** Ingersoll's not asserted to be right, 235; Ingersoll's the result of evidence, 235; modification of, a reciprocal process, 298-99.

**BELLONA, N. Y.,** 17.

**BENCH AND BAR OF ILLINOIS,** eminence of the, 43-44.

**BENEVOLENCE,** Ingersoll's. *See* Charity, Philanthropy.

**BENTHAM, Jeremy,** 348.

**DENTON, N. Y.,** 17.

**BERLIN MISSION,** the, 93-94.

**BIBLE:** About the Holy, 174; *Is All of the Inspired?* 112; "of the world," the, 136; inhumanities of the, Ingersoll leading an insurrection against the, 538 ext.; not an infallible guide, 276; not the foundation of law and morality, 342-49; stumbling-block, the, of the human race, 276; the Ingersoll, 422.

**BILLINGS, Frank,** Ingersoll consults, 217.

**BIOGRAPHY:** great men belittled by, 3; Ingersoll's indifference to, 6-8.

**BIOLOGY:** Ingersoll's knowledge of, 524-25; "then I studied," 261 ext.

**BIRTH, Ingersoll's,** its date, 1, 17.

## BOYCOTT

**BIRTHPLACE:** of Burns, *The*, a poem, 98-99; of Ingersoll, 1-3; of Ingersoll's father, 8; of Ingersoll's mother, 12.

**BIRTHPLACES** of Burns, Ingersoll, Lincoln, and Shakespeare, compared, 2-3.

**BJÖRNSSON, Bjornstjerne,** extracts from letters from, 501.

**BLACK, Jeremiah S.:** colloquy with, 111-12 n.; controversy with, 111-13—Whitman's comment on the, 113 n.; induces *The North American Review* to change the title of Ingersoll's article, 112-13; mentioned, 256; on Ingersoll's eloquence and power as a legal advocate, 516 n.

**BLAINE, James G.:** campaign of, 1884, Ingersoll's failure to take part in the, 515; mentioned, 105-6 n.; speech nominating, 76-83—effect of, 78 ext., 81, 83—origin and preparation of, 80-83—quoted, 78-80.

**BLASPHEMY:** Charles B. Reynolds tried for, 132-38, 527; Ingersoll threatened with arrest for, 540; "What is real?" 136 ext.

"Blood was water, money was leaves," 108 ext.

**BLOOMINGTON, Ill.,** lectures at, 50.

"BLUNDERD," 329.

**BLUE-LAW STATES,** treatment of Ingersoll in, 540.

**BOK, Edward W.,** 138.

**BOLIVAR, Tenn.,** military engagement at, 57.

**BOOKS,** read by Ingersoll in boyhood and youth, 282. *See also* Literature.

**BOONTON, N. J.,** a mob at, attacks Mr. Reynolds, Free thought lecturer, 133.

**BOOTH, Edwin,** 152, 500.

**BOSTON:** Herald (*See* Herald); lecture in, by Ingersoll, account of a, 535-36.

**BOWMAN, William G.,** 39-40.

**BOYCOTT,** proposed, of the *Evening Telegram*, for publishing *A Christmas Sermon*, 161.

## BOYD

- BOYD, Thomas Q., 106 n.  
 BRADY, Thomas J., a defendant in the "Star-Route" case, 120.  
 BRAGG, General, report to, by General Forrest, on the fight at Lexington, 61.  
 BRAHMS, Johannes, 195.  
 BRAIN, the: and mind, Ingersoll's views of the relations of, 353-56, 362; and the forces of necessity, 326 *et seq.*; and thought, Ingersoll's views of the relations of, 353-54, 355 ext. *et seq.*, 372 ext.; consciousness, mind, thought, etc., 4-5; description, poetic, of, 479 ext.; Ingersoll's belief that it had reached its limit in three departments, 199; relations of, to genius, 5; the exclusive organ of mind, 4. *See also* Consciousness.  
 BREAST, the, of woman, 483 ext.  
 BREED, ———, druggist, 438.  
 BREEZE, Sidney, 44, 518 n.  
 BREWSTER, Attorney-General: In the "Star-Route" case, 121; mentioned, 118.  
 BRIGHT, John, compared with Ingersoll as an orator, 537 ext.  
 BROADWAY TABERNACLE (CONGREGATIONAL) CHURCH, 18.  
 BROOKE, James, and Stopford, compared with Ingersoll as orators, 537 ext.  
 BROOKLYN DIVINES, criticised, 127.  
 BROWN: Clarence S., on Ingersoll's conversations, 438—quoted, 517-18, 530-31; E. R., 178; Eva Ingersoll, and Robert G. Ingersoll, letter to, 430; Eva Ingersoll, "fragment" on the anniversary of, 429-30; Eva R. Ingersoll, 419, 421, 428; Walston H., marriage of, 418—mentioned, 217, 421.  
 BRUNO, Giordano: and the pope, 544; burned at the stake, 148; iconoclast, 300; mentioned, 285; Monument Fund, Ingersoll's contribution to the, 149 ext.; statue to, in Rome, Ingersoll invited to unveil the, 148; "the first real martyr,"

## CAMP

- 148; "the herald of the dawn," 149 ext.  
 BRYAN, William Jennings, 183 ext.  
 BRYANT, William Cullen, quoted, 466, 467.  
 BÜCKNER, Ludwig, 253.  
 BUCKLE, Henry Thomas, 253.  
 BUCKMAN TAVERN, the, Lexington, 52.  
 BUILDER, was Ingersoll a, or was he a destroyer? 292.  
 BUNSEN, Robert Wilhelm, 254.  
 BURBRIDGE, Captain, 61 n.  
 BURKE, Edmund, Ingersoll compared with, 146.  
 BURNS, Robert: "a little valley," 97 ext.; "as sweet a star," 151 ext.; birthplace of, 1, 2; characterization of, 97 exts., 98-99 ext.; compared with Ingersoll, 398-99—with Shakespeare, 97, 151 ext.—with Tennyson, 97-98; genius, sympathy, naturalness, wit, humor, etc. of, 97 ext.; his mother, nature, ashamed and proud of him, 150; In Ingersoll's mind day and night, 96 ext.; Ingersoll could repeat half of, 96 ext.; Ingersoll purchases a copy of, 96 ext.; Ingersoll's adoration of, 96; Ingersoll's fondness for, 30, 31, 37; Ingersoll's "hymn-book," 422; Ingersoll's lecture on, 96-99; lines of, to "Chloria," 469; mentioned, 96, 97, 98, 99; poem, by Ingersoll, on the birthplace of, circulated minus the author's name, 99; qualities of, mental and temperamental, 398-99; quoted, 398; *The Birthplace of*, quoted, 98-99; the first man to "let up the curtain" in Ingersoll's mind, 96 ext.  
 BUTTERFIELD, General, 118.  
 BYRON, Lord, Ingersoll's fondness for, 30.

## C

- CÆSAR, Julius, 179.  
 CALLOWAY, S. R., 221.  
 CAMDEN's *Compliment to Walt Whitman*, quoted, 165.  
 CAMP LYON, Peoria, 55.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## CAMPAIGNS

CAMPAIGNS, political, participated in by Ingersoll, 512. *See also* Politics.

CANADA, annexation of, desired by Ingersoll, 507 ext.

CANDOR, the source of Agnosticism, 238.

CANMER CASE, the, 527.

CANTALOUPE AND GOURD, remark concerning, 428 n.

CAPTURE OF INGERSOLL, by the Confederates, 60, 61-62.

CARNEGIE MUSIC HALL, New York, speech in, McKinley campaign, 185-90.

CARR, Clark E.; at the Ingersoll memorial meeting, Chicago, 494, 495-96; on Ingersoll as a conversationalist, 438-39; on Ingersoll's sacrifice of political honors, 68; on the affection and devotion of Ingersoll's regiment, 177 ext.; quoted, 45, 46-49.

CARROLL, Charles, letter to, 8 n.

CASES, legal, tried by Ingersoll, 527. *See also* Law, Lawyer.

CASEY, Samuel K., 39.

CATECHISM: A *Talmagian*, 117; class, Ingersoll attends, 25.

CATHOLICISM, the insolence of, 288.

CAUSE, First, the idea of a, untenable, 240-41.

CAVALRY, Alabama, the Fourth, 61.

—, Illinois, the Eleventh: Ingersoll takes command of, 55; meeting and resolutions of, on Ingersoll's death, 493-94; organization and service of, 55-62; reunion of, at Elmwood, in 1895, 176-79.

CAVENISH, Henry, his employment of the agnostic principle, in chemistry, 237.

CAZENOVIA, N. Y., death and burial of Ingersoll's mother at, 14-15.

CELIBACY, 385-86.

"CEMETERY, The," comment on, 478.

CENTENNIAL Oration, the, Peoria, 83-84.

CERTAINTY, the only unquestionable, 233.

## CHILDREN

CHANCE, cosmogonic, Ingersoll not a believer in, 243-44.

CHARACTER, Ingersoll's, the clergy, San Francisco, telegraph about, 92.

CHARITIES, Ingersoll's, 447-51.

CHARITY: monetary contributions to, by Ingersoll, 91, 119 n., 138, 149, 159, 167; on mingling "judgment" with, 449. *See also* Philanthropy.

CHARLESTOWN, Mass., lecture in, by Ingersoll, account of a, 537-38.

CHATHAM STREET CHAPEL AND THEATRE, 18.

CHESTER, Ill., *Clarion*, letter to, 216.

CHICAGO: and *New York Gold Speech*, *The*, 183-90; *Inter-Ocean*, *The* (*See* *Inter-Ocean*); *Journal* (*See* *Journal*); lecture in, account of a, 536-37; memorial meeting in, on the death of Ingersoll, 494-97, 499; Press Club, lecture on Voltaire before the, 175; speech in, Hayes campaign, 89-90; *Times*, *The* (*See* *Times*); *Tribune*, *The* (*See* *Tribune*).

CHILD, a: address at the grave of, 114-17—quoted, 115-16; letters on the death of, 411-12; should know no sorrow, 406 ext.; the laugh of, 407 ext.

CHILDHOOD, horrified by belief in everlasting torture, 543.

CHILDREN: affection in rearing, 407-8 *et seq.*; application of the rod to, 402-4, 409, 410; at table, 406 ext.; driven from home by Christians, 408 ext.; honesty, mental, necessity for, in rearing, 412-13, 414; how Ingersoll intended to treat his, 409 ext.; how to retain under the roof-tree, 408-9; Ingersoll's method of rearing, correcting, etc., 425-26; Ingersoll's relations with his, 419, 420-22, 425-29, 431-32; ironical advice as to punishing, 410-11; mental training of, at home, 412-14; pity for ill-treated, 405; punishment, corporal, of, 402-4, 409, 410; rights of, 407 ext.; should be kept away from priests, Sunday-schools,

## CHILDREN

## CLAY

etc., 413-14; should be reared with love, kindness, etc., 407 ext.; should be sincerely welcomed, 405; "spolling" the, with love and affection, 408; the old idea of treating, a part of orthodox Christianity, 400-4; the whipping of, 402-4, 409, 410; their rearing and education, chap. xvi, 400-14; to teach them to believe in devils, a crime, 413 ext.; total depravity of, 401, 402; treatment of, at school, 319; treatment of, biblical teaching concerning the 402, 403; treatment of, when Ingersoll began his work, 400-4; unwelcome, "fill the jails," 330 ext., 331 ext.; "We have no right to enslave our," 413 ext.; what Ingersoll said to his, 408 ext.; what they should be taught at school, 318-22.

CHRIST: a sun-god, 266 ext.; an iconoclast, 300; an "illegitimate child," Ingersoll's comment on, 66-67; ascension of, Ingersoll on the, 270-71; belief of, in a real Devil, 210-11; crucifixion of, Ingersoll on the, 269; divinity of, 265 ext.; if not tempted by a real Devil? 211; ignorant of the Western Hemisphere, 277; Ingersoll on the miraculous origin of, 264-66; Ingersoll's respect for, 294-95; Ingersoll's views concerning, 264-73, 277; life and death of, not an atonement, 273 ext.; life of Ingersoll likened to that of, 500; miracles wrought by, Ingersoll on the, 267-69; not superior to Buddha, Krishna, *et al.*, 277; raising of the dead by, Ingersoll on the, 267-69; resurrection of, Ingersoll on the, 269-70; "rode on an ass," 210 ext.; sacrifice of, 271-73; virtues of, can not be transferred, 273 ext.

CHRISTIAN: Advocate (*See* Advocate); Religion, *The*, in *The North American Review*, 112-13; Scientists, mentioned, 264; the orthodox, an iconoclast, 339.

CHRISTIANITY: controversy on, with Black, 111-13; controversy on, with Field, Gladstone, and Manning, 140-41; nothing original in, 277-78; 'of fifty years ago,' did Ingersoll attack the, chap. xi, 256-78; opposed to real education, 278; orthodox, and the treatment of children, 400-4; the assertion that it is positive as a reformatory force, 307 ext.; the fundamental "truths" of, Ingersoll's arguments against, chap. xi, 256-78; the fundamental "truths" of, stated by Ingersoll, 257-58 ext.; the fundamental "truths" of, summary of Ingersoll's arguments against, 274-78; why Ingersoll began opposition to, 290-91. *See also* Christ, Religion, Theology.

CHRISTMAS Sermon, *A*, controversy evoked by, 160-62.

CHURCH: and state, in America, 291 ext.; and state, "two vultures," 285 ext.; Ingersoll's ideal of a, 314-15 ext.; one only in each town, proposed, 314-15; the, "cannot stop or stay me," 91 ext.; the great, "that holds the world within its star-lit aisles," 504 ext.

CHURCHES, denominational: union of, proposed, 314-15; waste in maintaining, 314-15.

CICERO, Ingersoll compared with, 146.

CIGARS, letter acknowledging a gift of, 441-42.

CINCINNATI: *Daily Times* (*See* Times); *Enquirer* (*See* Enquirer); lecture in, by Ingersoll, account of a, 534-35.

CITIZEN, duties of the, to nation and state, 506.

"CIVIL RIGHTS" SPEECH, the, 126-27.

"CIVILIZATION rests upon the family," 387 ext.

CLARION, *The*, Chester, Ill., letter to, 216.

"CLARK" KNOWS IT," an anecdote, 29.

CLAY, Henry, Ingersoll compared with, as an orator, 537.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## CLERGY

CLERGY, the, mistake of, in assuming that the Devil is a "personification," 208-9, 211.

CLERGYMAN, a, becomes angered at Ingersoll over Voltaire, 455-56.

CLERGYMAN, on the purity etc. of Ingersoll's life, 500.

CLERK, Ingersoll employed as a, 36, 39, 40.

CLEVELAND, Grover, 138.

CLIENTS, Ingersoll's faithfulness to, 518-19.

CLIFFORD, William Kingdon, quoted, 413.

CLOVER CLUB, letter declining an invitation to the, 440-41.

COGGESHALL, Senator, 146.

COGNIZING FACULTY, the, not a potency, 326.

COLLOR OR ASYLUM, the charge that Ingersoll founded no, 450.

COLLEGES, "places where pebbles are polished," etc., 484.

COLONEL, service of Ingersoll as a, 54-62.

COLORS, suggested to Ingersoll by orchestral instruments, 201 ext.

COLUMBUS, Christopher, an iconoclast, 300.

COMMANDMENTS, the Ten, not the foundations of law and morality, chap. xlii, 342-49.

COMPANION, Ingersoll as a: in early manhood, 37, 40-41; in youth, 30.

COMPASS, the, "not a force," 328 ext.

COMPENSATION, demand for, in the modification of opinions, 298-99.

COMPLIMENT, a kind of, that Ingersoll did not appreciate, 69.

COMPOSER, musical, universal tongue of the, 201.

COMPROMISE: defined, 306; Ingersoll would not, 305-6; "the parents of," 485 ext.

COURT, Auguste, colloquy with the superintendent of Père Lachaise about, 75.

CONDUCT, moral responsibility for, 324-29.

## COTTAGE

CONDUCTOR, musical, interpretative importance of the, 201-2.

CONFEDERATE TROOPS, gallantry of, at Lexington, 61.

CONFUCIUS, the "reciprocity" of, 454.

CONGRESS, Ingersoll a candidate for, 44-49, 511.

CONKLIN, Robert H., 19.

CONKLING, Roscoe: Ingersoll's tribute to, 142-47; mentioned, 118.

CONSCIENCE, "horn of love," 409.

CONSCIOUSNESS: Ingersoll on, 355-56 ext.; origin of, 4; states of, all that can be known, 232-34. *See also* Brain.

CONSEQUENCES: acts must be judged by, 348 ext., 349 ext.; the "police of nature," 349 ext.

CONTROVERSY: Field-Gladstone-Manning-Ingersoll, the, 140-41; *Great Ingersoll, The*, 161 n.; Ingersoll-Black, the, 111-13.

CONVENTION: Republican national, the, 1876, 76; Republican state, the, Peoria, 1868, 63.

CONVERSATION, Ingersoll's, more interesting than his writings, 438-39.

CONVICT, advice about looking with scorn upon a, 324 ext.

CONVICTS: should be paid for labor, 335-37; should not be degraded, 333-34, 336; treatment of, 332-38.

CONWAY, Moncure Daniel: letter to, extract from a, 94; mentioned, 500; quoted, 68; tribute of, to Ingersoll, 537-38.

COOKING: Ingersoll's knowledge and practice of, 423-24; its relation to civilization, 423.

COOPER, Sarah B.: letter of, extract from a, 379 n.; mentioned, 376-77, 378.

COPERNICUS, an iconoclast, 300.

CORINTH, Battle of, Ingersoll in the, 57.

CORN, "The withered banners of the," 464 ext.

COTTAGE, a, and an old woman, Ingersoll paints a picture of, 189-90.

## COUDERT

- COUDERT, Frederic R., discussion with, 146.
- COUNSELOR AND ADVOCATE: Ingersoll's abilities as a, 516-28; qualifications of the, considered, 523; was Ingersoll the greatest? 522-28. *See also* Law, Lawyer.
- COUNTRY, "This is our," etc., 187 ext.
- COURIER, *The Whig and*, on Ingersoll's speech, Bangor, Hayes campaign, 85-86.
- COURT: Ingersoll's manner and methods in, 519-22, 523; international, an, proposed, 313 ext.; U. S. Supreme, Ingersoll's practice before the, 515-16; U. S. Supreme, its decision on the Civil Rights Act, criticized by Ingersoll, 126-27.
- COURT-HOUSE, the, Shawneetown, 41.
- COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE OF INGERSOLL, 50-54.
- COW, anecdote of a, 27-28.
- CRADLE, the, rescued from the orthodox hell, 543.
- CRATTY, Thomas, 494, 495.
- "CREATE," blotted from language, by science, 238.
- CREATION: biblical account of, not new, 275; mentioned, 244; no evidence of, 357 ext.
- CREATOR: how Ingersoll attacked the problem of a, 239-40; idea of a, an absurdity, 240; Ingersoll's arguments against the doctrine of a, 258-59; Ingersoll's belief on the subject of a, 239-44.
- "CREED OF SCIENCE," 301 ext.
- CREEDS, "break the hearts of the loving," 377 ext.
- CRIME AND CRIMINALS, Ingersoll's views of, 322-38.
- CRIMINALS, production of, cause and prevention of the, 322, 324-32, 333, 338.
- CRISIS, *The*, by Thomas Paine, 160-61.
- CRITIC, Ingersoll as a miscellaneous, 526.
- CRITICISM: higher, Ingersoll charged with lack of knowledge of the, 256; higher, probable relations of Ingersoll's

## DEATH

- soll's propaganda to the, 541-42; that Ingersoll 'took away all and gave nothing,' chap. xii, 279-341; that Ingersoll 'tore down without building up,' chap. xii, 279-341; that Ingersoll was 'a mere iconoclast,' chaps. xii-xiv, 279-379; that Ingersoll was not constructive, but destructive, chap. xii, 279-341.
- CROCKETT, John W., 39 n.
- CROSS, the: ancient employment of, 358; not original with Christianity, 278.
- CRUCIFIXION, if public, "the miracles were private," 269 ext. *See also* Christ.
- CRUMP'S LANDING, Ingersoll's regiment at, 56.
- CUNA, annexation of, desired by Ingersoll, 507 ext.
- CUNNING, epigram on, 486 ext.
- CUNNINGHAM, John Marion, 36, 39.
- CURTIS, George William: contributor to the Beecher memorial volume, 138; mentioned, 118-19; spell-bound by Ingersoll's eloquence, 78 ext.
- CZAR OF RUSSIA, *et al.*, less interesting than Ingersoll, 90.

## D

- DARROW, Clarence S., 494, 495.
- DARWIN, Charles: and special creation, 254; his "bulldog," Huxley styled, 254; iconoclast, 300; Ingersoll's familiarity with, 525; mentioned, 541.
- DAVIDSON, Colonel, 494.
- DAVIS: Bridge, military engagement at, 57; David, entertained by the Parkers, 53—mentioned, 44, 106 n.; Job, 155, 156, 157; John A., 155; will case, 153-59, 527.
- DEAD: "giving medicine to the," 101 ext.; raising of the, by Christ, Ingersoll on the, 267-69.
- DEATH: a "wall or a door," 356 ext.; Ingersoll and Whitman talk about, 167 n.; Ingersoll on, 356 ext., 357

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## DEATH

ext., 363 ext., 364 ext., 375-76 ext., 377-78 ext., 411 ext., 412 ext., 443 ext.; Ingersoll's resignation at the approach of, 219-20; it "is natural to shun," 357 ext.; letters on, 443; life, love, hope, fear, and, 115-16 ext.; suppose that it ends all, 375-76 ext. *See also* Immortality.

DEBATE, Ingersoll would meet all clergymen in one, 160.

DEBATES, the Ingersoll-Kellogg, 46-48.

DEBS, Eugene V., tribute of, to Ingersoll, 538.

DECISION, the Dred Scott, Ingersoll denounces, 510.

DECLARATION of the Free, Ingersoll's last poem: extracts from, 213; read at Ingersoll's funeral, 220.

DECORATION Day Oration, 1882, 117-19.

DEISM, untenable, 240.

DELUGE, the, a myth, 275-76.

DEMOCRACY: everywhere, Ingersoll believed in, 390; "mask of," snatched from rebellion, 80 ext.; Pearl, rallied by Ingersoll to support Lincoln, 510.

DEMOCRAT, Ingersoll as a, 44-49, 511-12.

DEMOSTHENES, Ingersoll compared with, 86, 154.

DENVER, memorial meeting in, on Ingersoll's death, 497-98.

DESCARTES, René: his *Discourse on Method*, 180; on the seat of the ego, 353.

DESCENT, the theory of, established, 254.

DESERT OF THEOLOGY, Ingersoll crosses the, 283.

DESION: and lockjaw, 249; evidence of, 207; Ingersoll's views of, 247-52.

DESTROYER, was Ingersoll a, or was he a builder? 292.

DEVIL: a physical being, according to the Old and the New Testaments, 210-11; belief of Christ in a real, 210-11; clergymen equivocate regarding the, 208-11; Ingersoll's lec-

## EDUCATION

ture on the, 209-13; Ingersoll's victory over the clergy concerning the "personification" theory of the, 211; keystone, the, of the Christian arch, 208, 211; the, of Christianity, brought from Babylon, 210.

DEVILS, belief in, origin of the, 210.

DIAMONDS: are "cold as intellect," 441 ext.; dimmed in colleges, 484 ext.

DICKENS, Charles, Ingersoll's familiarity with, 525.

"DISBELIEVER," as applied to Ingersoll, 223-24.

DISEASE: as natural as health, 253; mental, Christian view of, 254.

DOCTRINES, philosophical, the valuation of, 415-16.

DONALDSON, Thomas, letter to, 440-41.

DORSEY, John W., a defendant in the "Star-Route" trials, 120, 121; Stephen W., a defendant in the "Star-Route" trials, 120, 121, 125.

DOUGLAS, Stephen A.: an audience drawn away from, by Ingersoll, 513; mentioned, 44.

DOUGLASS, Frederick: his call at Ingersoll's home, 446 ext.; Ingersoll's treatment of, 445-47; introduces Ingersoll in Lincoln Hall, Washington, 126; *Life and Times of*, quoted, 445-46.

DOWAGIAC, Mich., and Philo D. Beckwith, 173-74.

DRAMATIC MIRROR, New York, 132.

DRAPER, John W., 253.

DRESDEN: Edition of *The Works of Ingersoll*, all references in this work are to the, 6 n.; Germany, 2; New York, 1-3, 17.

DRUMMOND, Judge, 518 n.

## E

EDDY, James R., 155, 157.

EDITORIALS, at Ingersoll's death, 490.

EDUCATION: Ingersoll's views of, 318-22; "real," 414; reforms with reference to, advocated, 318-22; should commence in the lap of the mother,

## EDUCATION

- 412; **universal**, and educating universally, a difference, 414.
- EFFECT, a "Great Last," 241.
- EGO, the, and the pineal gland, 353.
- EGOTISM, the, of man, illustrated by a fable of ants, 252.
- EIGHT to Seven Address, *The*, 92-93.
- ELECTORATE, the, Ingersoll's influence on, 514-15.
- ELEVENTH ILLINOIS CAVALRY. *See* Cavalry.
- ELKHART, Ind., speech at, Hayes campaign, 88-89.
- ELLIOTT, John Lovejoy, 221.
- ELMWOOD, Ill., reunion of Ingersoll's regiment at, 1895, 176-79.
- ELOQUENCE OF INGERSOLL: a jury begged to beware of the, 153-54; effect of the, at Indianapolis, 87; effect of the, on the foreman of a jury at Metamora, Ill., 521-22; "matchless," the, 154. *See also* Expression, Orator, Orators, Oratory, Poet, Prose-poetry, Speaker, Style.
- ELWELL, Professor, 157 ext., 158 ext.
- EMERSON, Ralph Waldo, 537 ext.
- "EMPEROR OF THE ROUND GLOBE," Ingersoll "would not smother one sentiment" to be, 64 ext.
- ENEMIES, Ingersoll's treatment of his, 454-56.
- ENERGY: and substance, eternity of, 258-59, 262; and substance, inseparable and eternal, 243; law, the, of the conservation of, 240, 254; or force, philosophically or scientifically considered, 240, 242, 243, 244, 246, 249, 254. *See also* Force, Matter, Substance.
- ENGLAND: Ingersoll lectures on, 74; Ingersoll visits, 74.
- ENQUIRER, *The Cincinnati Daily*, extract from, 534-35.
- ENTERPRISE, Territorial, Virginia City, Nev., extract from, 536.
- ENVIRONMENT, influence of, 324, 328-29.
- EPIGRAMS, Ingersoll's, examples of, 483-88.

## FANATICISM

- EPITHETS, theological, applied to Ingersoll, 223.
- ERNST, Heinrich Wilhelm, "The Elegie" of, 194 ext.
- ESTHETIC, Ingersoll's sense of the, 296-97.
- ETHICS. *See* Morals.
- EUCHARIST, the, pagan, 278.
- EULOGIES OF INGERSOLL, at his death, 490-501. *See also* Ingersoll, Robert G., tribute to, by —.
- EUROPE, Ingersoll's first trip to, 74-75 —second trip to, 98.
- EVENING: Telegram (*See* Telegram); Wisconsin (*See* Wisconsin).
- EVIDENCES, Christian, read by Ingersoll, 248.
- EVOLUTION: defined, 246; Ingersoll's views of, 351-53; of man, an epitome of the, 261-62.
- EXISTENCE AND PHENOMENA, the perception of, all that can be known, 231-34.
- EXPANSION, national, Ingersoll a believer in, 216 ext., 507.
- EXPRESSION: artistic and intellectual, Ingersoll's faculties of, chap. xviii, 458-88; clarity of Ingersoll's, 514; Ingersoll's method in the art of, 469, 470; Ingersoll's supreme mastery of, 477; simplicity of, possessed by Ingersoll, 514. *See also* Eloquence, Orator, Orators, Oratory, Poet, Prose-poetry, Speaker, Style.
- EXTRAVAGANCE OF LITERARY STATEMENT, Ingersoll's, 484.

## F

- FACE, 'that sweet, cold, has kept my heart warm,' 14 ext.
- FAITH, *The Foundations of*, 176.
- FAMILY, the: Importance and sacredness of, 385-99; Ingersoll's ideal of, 391 ext.; the religion of, 387, 388. *See also* Children, Home, Love, Marriage, Woman.
- FAMINE, where lipless, "mocked at want," 108 ext.
- FANATICISM, religious, 530-31.



# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## FARMING

FARMING in Illinois, *About*, 92.  
 FARRER, Clinton Plinckney, 132, 421;  
 FARRER, Sue M., 218-19, 421.  
 FATHER OF WATERS, the, 504 ext.  
 FAWCETT, Edgar: comments on *Is Suicide A Sin?* 501-2; letter from, 501-2; quoted, 264.  
 FAY, epigrams on, 485, 488; Ingersoll's desire to rid life and death of, 115-16 ext.; not reformatory, 10 ext.  
 FAY-GLABSTONE-MANNING-INGERSOLL CONTROVERSY, the, 140-41; Huxley's comment on, 142 n.  
 FAY, Henry M.: controversy with, 140; mentioned, 256.  
 FAY, James T., 93.  
 FAY, America's treatment of, 216 ext.  
 FAY, "no contrary they wouldn't rapire," 158 ext.  
 FAY, Charles G., 17, 18.  
 FAY, the gospel of the, 387, 388.  
 FAY CAUSE: arguments against the doctrine of a, 258; the idea of a, 240-41.  
 FAY, George Park, his "reply" to Ingersoll, 113.  
 FAY, Harrison Grey, 132.  
 FAY, the American, tributes to, 508.  
 FAY, "beneath a wilderness of," 5.  
 FAY, Secretary, 118.  
 FAY, E. B., Sr., 357.  
 FAY: all mental phenomena not accounted for on the basis of, 356 ext.; and matter, eternity of, 259 ext.; and matter, philosophically or scientifically considered, 357 ext.; and substance, philosophically or scientifically considered, 351; Inductibility of, 259 ext.; or energy, philosophically or scientifically considered, 240, 242, 243, 244, 246, 249, 250. See also Energy, Matter, Substance.  
 FAY OF NATURE, immutable, etc., 250-53.

## GARDEN

FORM, 'take from God the idea of, and Pantheism results,' 259 ext.  
 FORREST, Nathan Bedford: becomes a friend of Ingersoll, 62; captures Ingersoll, 60; engagement with the forces of, 58-62; Ingersoll ordered to intercept, 57; *Life of*, by Dr. Wyeth, quoted, 61 n.; paroles Ingersoll, 62.  
 FOUNDATION, the philosophical, upon which Ingersoll stood, chap. x, 223-55.  
 FOUNDATIONS of Faith, *The*, 176.  
 FRANCE, Ingersoll visits, and lectures on, after his return, 74.  
 FREE WILL, 324-29, 371.  
 FREEDOM: epigram on, 487 ext.; intellectual, defined, 488; wants and, 488 ext.  
 FREETHINKER: as applied to Ingersoll, 223-24; object, the, of the, 307-8 ext., 310-11.  
 FREETHINKERS, influence of, in destroying the belief in everlasting punishment, 544.  
 FREETHOUGHT: affirmative, positive, constructive, 307-8 ext., 310-11; summary of Ingersoll's life-work and influence in, 528-45; what it will give us, 308 ext. See also Infidelity, Secularism.  
 FRENCH, Alice (*Octave Thanet*), quoted, 517.  
 FRIENDS, Ingersoll and his, 434-43, 447, 456.  
 FUGITIVE SLAVE LAW, the, denounced by Ingersoll, 46 ext., 47 ext., 48 ext.  
 FUNDS, campaign, Ingersoll's status with reference to, 510.  
 FUTURE, past, and present, a vision of, 339-41.

## G

GALTSBURG, Ill., Ingersoll-Kellogg debate at, 46 ext.  
 GALILEI, an iconoclast, 300.  
 GARDEN, anecdote of driving a cow from a, 27-28.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## GARFIELD

- GARFIELD, James A.: campaign of, participation of Ingersoll in the, 109-11; effect of Ingersoll's eloquence on, 87; mentioned, 106 n., 100.
- GARRISON, William Lloyd: compared with Ingersoll as an orator, 48 ext.; mentioned, 93.
- GEER, David S., letter to, 356-57.
- GENEALOGY: Ingersoll's indifference to, 6; irrelevant in biography, 3.
- GENIUS: and mediocrity, the difference between, 462; expressional, Ingersoll's, 514; Ingersoll's inexpressible, 4; not explained by ancestry, 5-6; not explained by heredity, 3-4; origin of, unknown, 3-6; works of, regarded as "unsafe," 150.
- GENIUSES: oldest or youngest of their families, 8; their work done in the morning of life, 129.
- GESTURE, emphasis, tone, etc., in oratory, Ingersoll's theory and practice of, 188, 189-90.
- GHOSTS, *The*, 91-92.
- GIDDINGS, Joshua Reed, compared with Ingersoll as an orator, 48 ext.
- GILBERT, Frank, letter of, extract from a, 183.
- GIRL, the, who counts the leaves of a flower, 206-7.
- GLADSTONE, William Ewart: a contributor to the Beecher memorial volume, 138; compared with Ingersoll as an orator, 146, 537; controversy with, 140, 141; his attack on Ingersoll, Huxley's comment on, 142 n.—Whitman's comment on, 141-42 n.; mentioned, 256; on "reverential calm," 293, 294.
- GNOSTICS, the, 226, 227, 228.
- GOD: an honest, "the noblest work of man," 73; as a personality, argument against the conception of, 259-60 ext.
- GODS: created, not creators, 275; *The*, a lecture, 73; the, and a grain of sand, 487 ext.
- GOLDEN RULE, the: borrowed by Christianity, 278; Ingersollian, 383.

## GURLEY

- GOOD: and evil, origin of man's ideas of, 252; happiness the only, 347 ext.
- GOODNESS, absolute, 346-47.
- GOVERNMENT, the Federal: should "defend its defenders," 506-7 ext.; when it should be sovereign, 506.
- GOVERNOR OF ILLINOIS, "I am not asking to be," 64 ext.
- GOVERNORSHIP OF ILLINOIS: Ingersoll a candidate for the, 63-68, 69, 71, 72; Ingersoll's declination of the nomination for the, a blessing, 71; Ingersoll's refusal to keep silent on religious questions for the, 64-65, 67-68, 69, 71, 72, 73; Ingersoll's refusal to sell his mental manhood for the, 511; Palmer, General John M., as a candidate for the, 64 n.; Voltaire, and Ingersoll's candidacy for the, 456 n.
- GOSPEL, the: of fellowship, of health, of living, of this world, etc., 302; of the fireside, 302, 387, 388.
- GOURD AND CANTALOUPE, remark concerning, 428 n.
- GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC, the, its invitation to Ingersoll, 117-18.
- GRANDCHILDREN, Ingersoll's, letter to, 430.
- GRANDPARENTS, Ingersoll's: maternal, 12, 13; paternal, 8.
- GRANT, Ulysses S.: banquet to, in Chicago, Ingersoll at the, 106-9; mentioned, 118.
- GRATITUDE: "and then my heart was filled with," 285-86; "the fairest flower," 483 ext.
- "GREAT LAST EFFECT," a, 241.
- GREEKS, the, the marbles of, immortal, 198.
- GREEN, Beriah: Ingersoll's middle name taken from, 8; mentioned, 14.
- GREENVILLE, Ill.: Ingersoll's life in, 29-32; *Journal*, 31.
- GROVELAND, Ill.: Ingersoll meets his future wife at, 54; mentioned, 417, 418.
- GURLEY, Frank B., leads the charge on Ingersoll's battery, 61.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## HAECKEL

### H

**HAECKEL**, Ernst: **conversation** of, with an eminent jurist, 524; **his greeting** to Ingersoll, 500; **Ingersoll's familiarity** with, 524; **mentioned**, 541.

**HALL**, John E., 39 n., 40.

**HAMILTON**, Alexander, and John Church, 13.

**HAMLET**, Ingersoll as, 152.

**HANCOCK**, General, 118.

**HAPPINESS**: **defined**, 347 ext., 393; **Ingersoll's domestic**, 429; **relation** of, to morality, 347-48 ext.; **the greatest**, "for the greatest number," 348; **the "only good,"** 347 ext.; **where** it "dwells," 487 ext.

**HAPPY**, "only one way to be," 391 ext.

**HARRISON**: **Benjamin**, campaign of, 1892, Ingersoll's failure to take part in the, 515; **Frederic**, 142 n.

**HARVEST**, the, "answers and fulfills," 92 ext.

**HAWAII**, acquisition of, pleases Ingersoll, 507.

**HAYES CAMPAIGN**, the (84-90): **amount** of work done by Ingersoll in, 512; **Ingersoll's reasons** for entering, 84-85, 93; **speech** in—Bangor, 85-86—Chicago, 89-90—Elkhart, 88-89—Indianapolis, 87-88—New York, 86-87.—, **Rutherford B.**, biographical sketch of, Ingersoll requested to write a, 103 ext.

**HEARTH-FIRE**, the, Ingersoll's sun, 394.

**HEAVEN**: a glimpse of, 388 ext.; **Ingersoll** sought to make earth a, 544; "Is here," a vision of the future, 341; **no love** in, 374. *See also* Immortality.

**HELENA Daily Herald, The**, quoted, 159-60.

**HELL**: a remembered nightmare, 543; **extinguished**, 543 ext.; **Ingersoll's influence** in destroying the belief in, 542-44; "paved with infants' skulls," 402; **real** to the orthodox of Ingersoll's boyhood, 542. *See also* Immortality, Punishment.

## HUBBARD

**HELMHOLTZ**, Hermann Ludwig Ferdinand von: **Ingersoll's familiarity** with, 525; **mentioned**, 254, 541.

**HENRY**, Patrick, 107 ext.

**HERALD**: **Boston**, extract from, 535-36; **Helena Daily, The**, quoted, 159-60; **New York**, 146 n.—its account of Ingersoll's speech, Brooklyn, Garfield campaign, 109 ext., 110-11 ext.

**HEREDITY**, does not explain genius, 3-6.

**"HERETIC,"** as applied to Ingersoll, 223-24.

**HERETICS and Heresies**, 73-74.

**HISTORY**, "a detailed account of things that never occurred," 16.

**HOLMES**, Oliver Wendell: a contributor to the Beecher memorial volume, 138; **resemblance**, facial, of Ingersoll's father to, 21.

**HOLYOAKE**, George Jacob: **mentioned**, 501; **on Ingersoll's originality**, 149.

**HOLY-WATER**, used before Christ, 278.

**HOME**: **Importance** and sacredness of the, 385-99; **Ingersoll** in his, 417-32, 435-36, 451, 456; **Ingersoll's**, a heaven, 422; **Ingersoll's**, an attractive center, 435; **Ingersoll's devotion** to his, 423; **Ingersoll's**, those who frequented, 435-36; **picture** of a, in winter, 388; **reforms** with reference to the, advocated, 315-18; **the Ingersollian ideal** of, 390-91; "where virtue dwells with love," 387 ext.; **woman**, love, marriage, and, chap. xv, 380-99.

**"HONEST 'BOB,'"** the boy Ingersoll, 11.

**HONESTY AND CANDOR**, epigram on, 486 ext.

**HONORS**, political, that Ingersoll might have received, 67-73.

**HOOD**, Thomas, 28.

**"HOPE SEES A STAR,"** 105.

**HOPKINS**, Josiah, 9.

**How To Reform Mankind**, 182.

**HOYNE**, Phillip, 513 n.

**HUBBARD**, Elbert, 500.

## HUGO

- HUGO, Victor: Ingersoll, Lincoln, and, on war, compared, 87; Ingersoll's familiarity with, 525.
- HUMBOLDT, Alexander von: Ingersoll, seated on the stage, recalls a picture of, 186-87; Ingersoll's familiarity with, 524-25; lecture on, 73; mentioned, 541.
- HUMOR, Ingersoll's, in the Davis will case, 155-58. *See also* Wit.
- HUSBANDS, advice to, 391-93, 395.
- HUSTED, General, 146.
- HUTCHINSON, Anne, 52.
- HUXLEY, Thomas Henry: declares for the descent of man, 254; his connection with the origin of "Agnostic" and "Agnosticism," 226-28; Ingersoll's familiarity with, 525; letter from, on the Field-Gladstone-Manning-Ingersoll controversy, 142 n.; mentioned, 501, 541; quoted, 232, 233, 239; scientific standing etc. of, 226-28.
- "HYMN-BOOK," the Ingersoll, 422.
- HYPERBOLE, example of, 480.

## I

- "I AM BETTER NOW," 105, 219.
- "I DO NOT PRETEND TO KNOW," 378 ext.
- "I REMEMBER, I REMEMBER," poem, anecdote concerning, 28.
- ICONOCLASM: Ingersoll's, alleged result of, 297-99 *et seq.*; was it all for which Ingersoll stood? 281 *et seq.*; without, reform is impossible, 299. *See also* Reform, Reformer, Reforms.
- ICONOCLAST: 'a mere,' why Ingersoll was called, 305-6; a missile hurled by the rabble, 299; as applied to Ingersoll and others, 299-301; origin and meaning of, 280-81; was Ingersoll 'a mere'? Chaps. xii-xiv, 279-379. *See also* Reform, Reformer, Reforms.
- ICONOCLASTS, the greatest, the greatest reformers, 299-300.
- IDEAL, the, Ingersoll's devotion to, in expression, 458-59, 470.

## INFIDEL

- IDEALIST: assertion (metaphysical) of the, as to objective reality, 232-34; Ingersoll an, in expression, 458-59, 470.
- IDEALS, hopes, etc., modification of, a reciprocal process, 297-99.
- IDEAS, all of man's, a posteriori, 362.
- IGNORANCE, the only darkness, 66.
- ILLINI, *The, A Story of the Prairies*, quoted, 45, 48.
- ILLINOIS: Cavalry, the Eleventh, Ingersoll's regiment (*See* Cavalry); governorship of (*See* Governorship).
- IMMORTAL, "some things are," 198-99 ext.
- IMMORTALITY: belief and, 360-61; Christian, opposed, 394; did Ingersoll deny? 356 *et seq.*; hope of, almost universal, 362—ancient existence of the, 358-59, 362—foundation of the, 362-63—more consoling because Ingersoll lived, 379—not dependent on sacred books etc., 358-61, 363; Idea, the, of, "like a sea has ebbed and flowed," 363 ext.; Ingersoll's views of, chap. xiv, 350-79; not taught in the Old Testament, 359; some of Ingersoll's concrete statements concerning, 356-57, 361, 363, 364, 373, 375-76, 377-78. *See also* Death, Hell, Punishment (everlasting).
- INDEPENDENCE, individual declaration of, 91.
- INDIAN, an, on the limitations of knowledge, 239.
- INDIANA BATTERY, the Fourteenth, 58.
- INDIANAPOLIS: *A Vision of War*, delivered at (*See* War); Journal (*See* Journal).
- INDIVIDUAL, the, Ingersoll not prejudiced against, 445.
- INDIVIDUALITY: lack of, in writers, 460-61; lecture on, 73.
- INERDIATE, the, moral responsibility of, 328 ext.
- INFIDEL: as applied to Ingersoll, 223-24; "The," extract from, 480.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## INFIDELITY

INFIDELITY, assertion that it is "negative" as a reformatory force, 307 ext. See also Freethought, Secularism, Reform, Reformer, Reforms.

MODELS: not allowed to testify, 289, 1 ext.; *The Great*, 111.

INGERSOLL-BLACK CONTROVERSY, the, 1-13.

INGERSOLL-KELLOGG DEBATES, the, 46 ext., 47 ext., 48 ext.

INGERSOLL: Col. Robert G. *As He Is*, 9 n.; E. C. and R. G., law-firm, 41-42; Ebenezer, 8.

Ebon Clark: admitted to the bar, 38; birthplace of, 17; championed by Robert, 101-2; childhood and youth of, inseparable from Robert's, 100-1; commences the practice of law, 41; death of, 104; dedication of a book to, by Robert, 103; delight of, over Robert's triumph, Blaine speech, 102; elected to Congress, 17; funeral of, 105-6 n.; letters from, 102, 103; mentioned, 35, 411 n.; radical in theology, 101; relations with, and affection for, Robert, 100-5; tribute to, 104-5; urges Robert to prepare the Blaine speech, 81-83.

Eva A.: ancestors of, 51-53; mentioned, 421; mother of, not a Christian, 53; parents of, 51-54; present at her husband's death, 8-19. See also Parker, Eva A.

Eva R.: birth of, 418; letters to, extracts from, 427; marriage of, 8-19.

ISLANDS, 125-26.

John: abolitionist, 21; and the lumps awaiting his infant son, 8; birthplace of, 8; death of, 12; domestic relations of, 10-12; education of, 9; eloquence of, 22-23; documents, native, of, 9; endurance, physical, of, 23; evangelist, 23; gives up everlasting punishment, 9-10; graduation of, 8; Grammar, a, 21; individuality of, 21; literary, ministerial, of, 15-24; marriage of, 8; opposition of, to

## INGERSOLL

slavery, 15, 19, 22; ordained, 9; orthodoxy of, 15, 21-22; parentage of, 8; pastor at—Ashtabula, O., 19—Belleville, N. Y., 19—Bellona, N. Y., 17—Benton, N. Y., 17—Cazenovia, N. Y., 18—Dresden, N. Y., 17—Greenville, Ill., 20—Hampden, N. Y., 19—Hanover, N. Y., 17—Marion, Ill., 20—New York, N. Y., 17-18, 21—North Madison, O., 20—Pittsford, Vt., 9—Pompey, N. Y., 17—West Dresden, N. Y., 17; personality of, 21-22; preaches at—Benton, Ill., 20—Mount Vernon, Ill., 20—Oberlin, O., 19—Saybrook, O., 19 (*See also* pastor at, above); requests Robert to read to him on his death-bed, 10; resemblance of, facial, to Dr. Holmes, 21; resides at Belleville, Ill., 20; restlessness of, in the pulpit, 22; studies theology, 9; unkindness of, alleged, 10 ext.; views, religious, of, 9-10; wrestler, as a, 24.

—, John C., and wife, letters to, 411-12; Margaret (Whitcomb), 8; Mary Jane, 35.

—, Mary Livingston: ancestry of, 12-13; birthplace of, 12; character and attributes of, 13-14; death of, 14; dies without knowing of her dowry to mankind, 99-100; her love of liberty, 14; her son Robert's regard for her memory, 30-31; her "sweet, cold face," 14 ext.; parentage of, 12; prepares a petition for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, 14.

—, Maud R.: birth of, 418; mentioned, 421, 427, 430 ext.

— MONUMENT ASSOCIATION, Peoria, 491.

—, Mrs. John C., sister of, letter to, 443.

—, Mrs. Robert G. See Ingersoll, Eva A.

—, Robert G.: a constant reader, 437; a constructive ethical reformer, 306 *et seq.*; a perfectly developed human being, 202; a poet and artist,

## INGERSOLL

411; acquaintanceship of, its extent, 489; admitted to the bar, 38; age at which he reached the heights of eloquence, 130; alertness, resourcefulness, etc. of, as a lawyer, 520; Americanism of, 508-9; an Agnostic-atheist, 225; *An Open Letter to*, by Dr. Field, 140; and Anton Seidl, 202-6; and his friends, 434-43, 447; and Remenyi, 194, 195-97; "answers" to, 540; anti-theological humanitarian crusade of, 400-1 *et seq.*; appearance, manner, etc. of, before an audience, 184 ext., 471, 473-75, 534; as a companion—in early manhood, 37, 40-41—in youth, 30; as a cook, 423-24; as a Democrat, 44-49; as a literary critic, 98, 168; as a prose-poet, a study of, 463-69; as a reformer, 498; as a story-teller, 37, 40; as a verbal artist, 144; assassination of, resolved upon, 531; at the grave of a child, 114-17; attacked by the clergy of San Francisco, 92; attempts to drive a cow from a garden, 27; attends academy—at Ashkhabula, 27—at Greenville, 30; attends Sunday-school, 19, 25, 26, 27; autobiography, mental, of, 180-81; baptism of, 18; becomes a Republican, 48-49; behavior of, as a boy, 11-12, 25-29; benevolence, early, of, 34; birth of, its date, 1, 17; birthplace of, 1-3; born to poverty, adversity, etc., 128; boyhood and youth of, 281-82; boyhood of, 25-33; brothers and sisters of, 8; candidate for Congress, 44-49, 511; capture of, by the Confederates, 60, 61-62; career of, factors influencing the, 286 *et seq.*; characterized, 1, 295-97, 447-51; charity of, 91, 119 n., 138, 149, 159, 167, 449; children of, how their father intended to treat them, 409 ext.; children of, their birth, 418; children of, their devotion, 419, 420, 426, 432; children of, their re-

## INGERSOLL

lations with him, 419, 420-22, 425-29, 431-32; commences the practice of law, 41; commences the study of law, 35; commissioned colonel, 55; conversation of, more interesting than his writings, 438-39; courtship and marriage of, 50-54; cremation of the remains of, 221; daughters of (*See* children of, above); death of, 219, 489—attention of the press to the, 490—its cause, 219—memorial meetings on the, 67, 491-98, 499—sermons on the, 490—universal regret at the, 489-501; did he attack 'the theology of fifty years ago,' or did he attack the Christianity of his time? Chap. xi, 256-78; did he endeavor to destroy the hope of immortality? Chap. xiv, 350-79; did he practise what he preached? Chap. xvii, 415-57; did he take away all and give nothing? Chap. xii, 279-341; did he 'tear down without building up'? Chap. xii, 279-341; discovers his oratorical gifts, 472-73; domestic life of, 417-32, 435-36, 451, 456; domestic philosophy of, its peculiar features, how carried out, 430-32; domestic teachings of, chaps. xv-xvi, 380-414; domestic teachings of, ennobling effect of the, 432-34; emotions of, 202; enemies of, how treated, 454-56; environment of, during boyhood and youth, 281-82; epigrammatic and phrasal faculties of, exemplified, 482-88; esthetic sense of, 296-97; eulogies of, at his death, 490-501; evolution, literary and philosophical, of, 180-81; exceptions which nature made with, 129-30, 131; expressional faculties of, 470-71; facial appearance of, 473-74; fame of, reluctance in recognizing, 493 ext.; family life of, 417-32, 435-36, 451, 456; family of, as a sustaining and inspiring influence, 420-21—their estimate of his anti-theological propaganda, 419; father of (*See* Ingersoll, John);

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## INGERSOLL

elling and imagination of, 192; first lecture of, 50; first public speech of, 471-73; forgets his piece" at an entertainment, 28-30; funeral of, 220-21; gallantry of, in battle, 56-57, 59-60; "greater than Shakespeare," 160; his anti-theological crusade, his qualifications for undertaking, 254-55—intellectual conditions at the beginning of, 253-54; his aptness as a scholar, 27, 29, 32-33; his art of condensation, 462; his beliefs not asserted to be right, 235; his beliefs the result of evidence, 235; his harm of presence and conversation, 436; his childhood and youth inseparable from Ebon's, 100-1; his courage, aggressiveness, honesty, etc. as a reformer, 495-97; his course and method of propaganda, 492-95; his encyclopedic knowledge, 436-37; his extravagance of literary statement, 484; his face, a study of, 473-74; his faculties of artistic and intellectual expression, chap. xviii, 458-88; his fame secure, 495; his form, voice, presence, etc., 471, 473-75; his genius unexplicable, 3-4; his grasp and penetration, 249; his habits of literary production, 131-32; his immortality "fixed and glorious," 538 ext.; his life threatened by fanatics, 430; his mental manhood, refusal to sell, to be governor, 64-65, 67-68, 69, 71, 72, 73; his mentality as a reader, 437-38; his oratorical masterpiece, the question as to what it is, 477 *et seq.*; his originality and effectiveness of expression, 149; his personality put into his lines, 460; his philosophy of life, 214 ext., 295-96; his political doom sealed, 65-66; his productions unjustly ignored by the literal, 482; his profundity of thought, 436-37; his relations with, and affection for, his brother Ebon, 100-5; his retentiveness of memory, example of, 437-38; his teachings

## INGERSOLL

the one truly reformatory force, 310-11; his tenderness and compassion, 66-67; his tribute to his brother Ebon, quoted, 104-5; his voice, the compass of, 535 ext.; his wedding-tour, 56; home life of, 417-32, 435-36, 451, 456; home of, a heaven, 422; home of, an attractive center, 435; home of, those who frequented, 435-36; honesty and fearlessness of, in proclaiming anti-theological views, 67-73; honors to, by the citizens of Elmwood and Peoria, 176-78; Imagination and feeling of, 192; imposed upon by beggars, etc., 449; income of, 451; influence of—on the electorate, 514-15—on the theological mind, 541; intellectual depth of, 164; investigates the theologies of the world, 283 *et seq.*; islands named after, 126; kindness of, to servants, 424; last conversation of, 218-19; last illness of, 217-19; last legal address of, 215-16; last letter of, 216; last poem of, 213; last political speech of, 185-90; last public appearance of, 215; last public utterance of, on religion, 214; last words of, 219; last years of, 216-17; law-students of, on his gifts as a lawyer, 517 ext.; legal career of, summarized, 515-28; letters, anonymous, to, 530, 531-32; letter from, stating that his life-work of combating superstition is nearly done, 543; letter of condolence from, extract from, 14; liberator of man, woman, and child, 380 *et seq.*; life of, "like that of Christ," 500; life-work and influence of, in rationalism, summarized, 528-45; "looked up" to, 38; marriage of, 54—an ideal one, 417-18; medallion portrait of, beside one of Shakespeare, 174; memorial meetings on the death of, 67, 491-98, 499—in Chicago, 494-97, 499—in Denver, 497-98—in Peoria, 491-94; mental and moral attributes of, 281; military

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## INGERSOLL

career of, 54-62; **military** engagement of, at—Bolivar and Davis Bridge, 57—Corinth, 57—Lexington, 58-62—Shiloh, 56-57; **military** record of, 493 ext.; **mirth** of, 540; **modesty** of, in personal biography, 439; **monuments** to, subscriptions for, 491; **mother** of (*See* Ingersoll, Mary Livingston); "not as other men are," 131; **number** of people addressed by, 538; **oratorical** power of, its variety, 537-38 ext.; **oratorical** presence of, 534; **ovation** to, last political speech, 186-88; **paroled** by General Forrest, 62; **personal** appearance of, in his last political speech, 186-90; **philanthropy** of, 450-51; **philosophical** and theological status of, 223-25; **phrasal** and epigrammatic faculties of, exemplified, 482-88; **physical** presence of, described, 184 ext.; **place** of, in the gratitude of posterity, 544-45; **plagiarism** from, 76 n.; **poverty**, comparative, of, at his death, 451; **poverty** of, during boyhood, 28; **prejudice** against, 493 ext.; **productions** of, at the several periods of life, 129-30; **qualities** of, mental and temperamental, 398-99; **reading** done by, in boyhood and youth, 282; **repertoire** of, as a lecturer, 533; **resigns** his commission as colonel, 62; **schooling** of, 26, 28, 32-33; **scientist** and poet, 250; **scope** and perception of, 525; **spiritual** importance of, 163; **spontaneity** of, 164; **studiousness** of, 94-95; **sympathy** of, for the imprisoned and despised, 324-25—for the poor etc., 449, 450; **tenderness** and sympathy of, in an address at a child's grave, 114; **the** charge that he was not profound, 539-40; **the** guiding-star of his fellow-citizens, 539; **the** word-wizard of his century, 463; "the world will see but one," etc., 184 ext.; **tribute** to, by—Brown, E. R., 178—Carr, Clark E., 495-96—Cratty, Thomas, 495—Darrow, Clar-

## INSANE

ence S., 495—Fawcett, Edgar, 501-2—Holyoake, George Jacob, 149—*Saladin*, 501—Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 501—the citizens of Chicago, 494-97—the citizens of Denver, 497-98—the citizens of Peoria, 491-94—*The Inter-Ocean*, Chicago, 184-85—Wetmore, Samuel W., 26—Whitman, Walt, 163-64; **tributes** to, sympathetic mental relation of the authors of, to their subject, 500-1; **tutored** by his father, 32; **unprejudiced** against the individual, 445, 457; **untrammelled** in thought and expression, 102 ext.; **versatility** of, 523-27—in closing the lecture *The Devil*, 212-13—in the Davis will case, 154-55; **was**, first of all, an orator, 470-71; **was** he a destroyer, or was he a builder? 292; **was** he 'a mere iconoclast'? Chaps. xii-xiv, 279-379; **was** he constructive, or was he destructive? Chap. xii, 279-341; **what** did he ridicule? 294-95; **what** he beheld on reaching intellectual maturity, 289-90; **what** he gave for what he took away, 301-2; **what** he said to his children, 408 ext.; **what** he was and what he was not, philosophical and theological, 223-25; **why** he began his anti-theological crusade, 290-91; **why** we respect, 495 ext.; **wife** and children of, how treated in pecuniary matters, 430-32; **wife** and daughters of, his "Trinity," 427 ext.; **wife** and daughters of, a sustaining and inspiring influence, 420-21; **wish** of, as to his last days, 217-18 ext.; "would rather have been a French peasant," 397 ext.; **wrote** as a river runs, 463; **youngest** of five children, 8; **youth** of, 29-35.  
— *the Man*, extracts from, 517-18, 530-31.

**INSANE:** Ingersoll's influence over the, 452-54; moral responsibility of the, 328 ext.



# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## INSPIRATION

INSPIRATION, biblical, is pious pretension, 276.  
 INTELLIGENCE, an infinite, 260 ext.  
 INTELLIGENCER, *The*, Marion, Ill., 39.  
 K. K. OCEAN, *The*, Chicago: its account of Ingersoll's speech, McKinley campaign, 184-85; mentioned, 183; on Ingersoll at the Grant banquet, 107 ext.; on Ingersoll's oratorical genius, 514-15; sale of, increased by publishing Ingersoll's speech, McKinley campaign, 85.  
 K. K. PRETER, the musical, next in importance to the composer, 201-2.  
 K. K. LAND, Ingersoll visits, and lectures on, after his return, 74.  
 K. K. SUICIDE A SINF 175.  
 K. K. SCRATES, first to perfect the prose rhythms of Greek, 463.

## J

J. K. NESVILLE, Wis., Ingersoll's last illness begins at, 217.  
 J. K. PFERSON: Joseph, 152, 500; Thomas, we remember, 70.  
 J. K. GIOVANI IS WITH JOVE," 543 ext.  
 J. K. WELLS, poetic description of, 441 ext.  
 J. K. NISTON, J. H., letter to, 441.  
 J. K. KPHUS, his failure to mention Christ, 266.  
 J. K. ULE, James Prescott, 254.  
 J. K. JURNAL: Chicago, *The*, on Ingersoll in the Hayes campaign, 90; Greenville, *The*, 31; Indianapolis, *The*, on Ingersoll at the Grant banquet, 106 ext.  
 J. K. Y, Ingersoll on, 485 ext.  
 J. K. DOMMENT AND CHARITY, the "mingling" of, 449.  
 J. K. RIES, Ingersoll's influence on, 520-22 *et seq.*  
 J. K. RISTS, eminent, "have bowed to prejudice," 343 ext.  
 J. K. RY, foreman of a, influence of Ingersoll over, in a murder trial, 521-22.  
 J. K. STRICK: a child of love, 386; Ingersoll on, 304-5.

## LAW

### K

KANT, Immanuel, quoted, 229.  
 KEATS, John, 171, 194.  
 KELLOGG-INGERSOLL DEBATES, the, 46-48.  
 KELLOGG, William, candidate for Congress against Ingersoll, 44-47.  
 KELLY, J. L. P., 61 n.  
 KEPLER, an iconoclast, 300.  
 KEW GARDENS, 56 n.  
 KIRCHOFF, Gustav Robert, 254.  
 KITTREDGE, Herman E., letter to, extract from a, 7.  
 KNIGHT, "like a plumed," 80 ext.

### L

LAKE SENECA, 2.  
 LAMON, Ward H., 106 n.  
 LAND, reforms with reference to, advocated, 316-18.  
 LAOCOON GROUP, the, 480.  
 LASH, "I do not believe in the," etc., 410-11.  
 LAUGH OF A CHILD, the, 407 ext.  
 LAURENTIAN ROCKS, the, 261 ext.  
 LAW: and morality, were Ingersoll's teachings inimical to? Chap. xiii, 342-49; aptitude of Ingersoll for the, 516; cases tried by Ingersoll, 527; civil, the Mosiac code not the foundation of, 342-43; Fugitive Slave, the, denounced by Ingersoll, 510; Ingersoll studies, 35, 36-37, 38, 39, 40, 43; Ingersoll's assiduous study of, after commencing practice, 43; Ingersoll's grasp of the principles of, 516-17, 520; Ingersoll's life-work and influence in the, 515-28; natural, defined, 245; natural, Ingersoll's conception of, 244-45, 247; natural, misuse of the term, 245-47; practice of, by Ingersoll, 41, 42, 43-44, 51, 54, 119-25, 132-38, 153-59, 215-16—duration of the, 515—summarized, 515-28; practice of, Ingersoll and his brother Ebon admitted to the, 38—commence the, 41; profundity in, Ingersoll's demonstrated in the "Star-Route" trials, 124.

## LAWS

LAWs, civil, foundation and ancient existence of, 342-43.

LAWYER: alertness, resourcefulness, etc. of Ingersoll as a, 520; courtesy of Ingersoll as a, 519-20; disadvantage under which Ingersoll labored as a, 522; duty of a, according to Ingersoll, 158; quickness of grasp as a, Ingersoll's, 517-18; thoroughness of Ingersoll as a, 519; was Ingersoll the greatest? 522-27. *See also* Law.

LEAR: Ingersoll as, 152; prayer of, 448.

LEAVES of Grass, author of, 168, 170.

LECKY, William Edward Hartpole, 253.

LECTURES, Ingersoll's: where delivered, 532; widespread comment on, 538 ext.

LES MISÉRABLES, Ingersoll comments on, 442 ext.

LETTER: from a bereaved mother, 378; from Ingersoll, stating that his life-work of combating superstition is nearly done, 543; Ingersoll's last, 216; reading, "Dear Colonel, I am a — fool," 122 ext.; to a bereaved mother, 377-78; to a nephew, extract from a, 429.

LETTERS: anonymous, to Ingersoll, 530, 531-32; from Ingersoll to his daughter Eva, extracts from, 427, 428-29.

LEWISTOWN, Ill., 440 n.

LExINGTON, Tenn., military engagement at, 58-62.

"LIBERAL," as applied to Ingersoll, 223-24.

LIBERTY: *Apostrophe to*, 127—extract from, 505; "at last is God," etc., 341; defined, 304; importance of, 135 ext.; in *Literature*, 167; Ingersoll on, 304, 305; "is my religion," 507 ext.; mental, necessity for, in rearing children, 412-14; "the birthright of all," 413 ext.; "the god of my idolatry," 505 ext. — of Man, Woman, and Child, *The*: delivery of, in Chicago, account of

## LOCOMOTIVE

a, 536-37; effect of, on the domestic views of an aged senator and others, 432-33; first delivery of, 91; mentioned, 304; repeated in San Francisco, 92.

LIE, a, "never fits a fact," 155 ext.

LIFE: a maelstrom, 251; a, "should not be written until it has been lived," 8 ext.; from the tree of, "buds and blossoms fall," etc., 116 ext.; is a "strange and winding road," 469 ext.; prose-poem on, 132; "the golden bridge of," 485 ext.; trivialities of, epigram on the, 485.

"LIKE A PLUMED KNIGHT," 80 ext.

LIMITATIONS of Toleration, *The*, 146.

LINCOLN, Abraham: anecdote of, 368 n.; birthplace of, 3; entertained by the Parkers, 53; "greatest of our mighty dead," 108 ext.; his "loving life," 109 ext.; Hugo, Ingersoll, and, on "war," compared, 87; Ingersoll's lecture on, 174; Ingersoll's services in the second campaign of, 512; Ingersoll's support of, 510; mentioned, 3, 44, 45, 46, 166; not raised up to free the slave, 248; we remember, 70.

LISBON, N. Y., birthplace of Ingersoll's mother, 12.

LISZT, Franz, 195.

LITERATI, commonplaceness of the productions of the, in comparison with those of Ingersoll, 482.

LITERATURE: Ingersoll's early fondness for, 30-31, 32-33, 37, 40 read by Ingersoll in boyhood and youth, 282; standards and ideals of, up to 1855, 150.

LIVINGSTON: Agnes Oceanica (Adams), 12, 13; Chancellor, 13; County, Manor, etc., 12; Edward, Ingersoll said to have resembled, 13; Mary, 8; Philip, 12; Robert, 12; Robert R., 13.

LOCKE, John, 262 ext.

LOCKJAW AND DESIGN, 249.

LOCOMOTIVE, Ingersoll's early practice of returning home in a, 425.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## LOGAN

AN, John A., 36, 39 n., 106.  
 r: "a transfiguration," 386 ext.;  
 "tree," opposed, 394; *Immortal*, a  
 sion of, on earth, 397-98; "Is a  
 power," 100 ext.; "music was born  
 ," 191-92 ext.; "only bow on  
 e's dark cloud," 384 ext.; "only  
 ing that will pay ten per cent.,"  
 93 ext.; prose-poem on, 384;  
 Shakespeare on, 385; the theme of  
 ingsoll's philosophy, 1; to think  
 , "as eternal," 397 ext.; what it  
 , what is born of it, etc., 386  
 xt.; woman, marriage, home, and,  
 chap. xv, 380-99.

JOY, Owen; compared with In-  
 ingsoll as an orator, 48 ext.; men-  
 oned, 17.

MATIC, n, who asked Ingersoll  
 out God, 453-54.

ACHING, the death penalty an ex-  
 ise for, 338 ext.

ON: Camp, Peoria, 55; Harriette  
 , 53.

## M

BANE, A. M. L., 33 n.

CADÉ, William P., 184.

CUNE, one of Ingersoll's law-part-  
 ers, 44.

DOWELL, Dr., 440.

GOVERN, John, 499.

KINLEY CAMPAIGN: Ingersoll's ser-  
 vices in the, 182-90, 512; Inger-  
 soll's speech, Chicago, in the, 183-  
 5; Ingersoll's speech, New York,  
 a the, 185-90.

CDONALD, Eugene M., 379 n.

CLAREN, Ian, helps to right a lit-  
 erary wrong against Ingersoll at  
 Alloway, 99.

OKLAN, Ferdinand, an iconoclast,  
 00.

N: existence of, before Adam and  
 Eve, 275; origin of, 260-62; spe-  
 cial creation of, 260, 261; the spir-  
 itually minded, described, 309-10  
 ext.

NKIND, *How To Reform*, 182.

## MEETINGS

MANNING, Cardinal; controversy  
 with, 140-41; Huxley's estimate of,  
 142 n.; mentioned, 256.

—, —, lawyer, 44.

MAN'S Place in Nature, 254.

MARION, Ill.: Ingersoll's life in, 35-  
 38; *Intelligencer*, *The*, 39 n.

MARRIAGE: all except the two parties  
 to, "impudent intruders" in, 386;  
 Ingersoll the champion of, 384-87;  
 Ingersoll's ideal of, 386; what con-  
 stitutes, 386; woman, love, home,  
 and, chap. xv, 380-99.

MARTINEAU, Harriet, 505.

MARTYR, Bruno "the first real," 148.

MASSKS, the, Ingersoll the teacher of,  
 514, 541.

MASTERPIECE: Ingersoll's literary, his  
 age when produced, 130; Ingersoll's  
 oratorical, the question as to what  
 is, 477 *et seq.*

MASTERPIECES, literary, three of In-  
 gersoll's lectures mentioned as, 174.

MATERIALIST: as applied to Ingersoll,  
 223-24; assertion of the, as to ob-  
 jective reality, 232-34.

"MATERIALISTS" AND "SPIRITUALISTS,"  
 words representing an unimportant  
 distinction, 356 ext.

MATERNITY, the most pathetic fact,  
 394-95.

MATLOCK, William, letter to, 216.

MATTER: and force, eternity of, 259  
 ext.; and force, philosophically or  
 scientifically considered, 357 ext.;  
 and spirit, our ignorance as to what  
 they are, 355-56 ext.; *Indestructi-*  
*bility* of, 259 ext.; or substance,  
 philosophically or scientifically con-  
 sidered, 232, 233, 234, 239-44. *See*  
*also* Energy, Force, Substance.

MAYER, Julius Robert von, 254.

MEDICINE, giving, "to the dead," 101  
 ext.

MEDIOCRITY AND GENIUS, 461-62.

MEETINGS, memorial, on Ingersoll's  
 death; Chicago, 494-97, 499; Den-  
 ver, 497-98; Peoria, 491-94. *See*  
*also* Ingersoll, Robert G., tribute  
 to, by —.

## MEMORY

MEMORY, retentiveness of Ingersoll's, 437-38.

MEN: "are oaks," etc., 399; great, "a part of the infinite," 504.

MERRIAM, —, lawyer, 44.

METAMORA, Ill., account of a case tried by Ingersoll at, 521-22.

METAPHYSIC, importance of, 230 ext.

METAPHYSICAL SOCIETY, English, formation and membership of, 226, 227.

METAPHYSICS, relations of, to Agnosticism, 230-34.

METER, perfect, not indispensable to poetry, 468.

METROPOLIS, Ill., Ingersoll teaches school at, 33-34.

MEXICO, annexation of, desired by Ingersoll, 507 ext.

MICHAELANGELO OF WORDS, Ingersoll the, 477.

MICROCEPHALOUS, the, versus Ingersoll, 462.

MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE, 8.

MILHOLLAND, John E.: helps to right a literary wrong against Ingersoll, 99; introduces Ingersoll, last political speech, 187.

MILL, John Stuart, 348.

MILLER, Owen, letter of condolence from, to Mrs. Ingersoll, 498-99.

MILLS, John G.: letter to, 443; mentioned, 395.

MILWAUKEE, lecture in, by Ingersoll, account of a, 535.

MIND: and brain, Ingersoll's views of the relations of, 353-56, 362; Ingersoll's belief that it had reached its limit in three departments, 199; mentioned, 4-5; origin of the, 4. *See also* Brain, Consciousness.

MINISTER: a, becomes angered at Ingersoll over Voltaire, 455-56; prophecies that Ingersoll would become a, 532 ext.; to Germany and France, proposed appointment of Ingersoll as, 93-94.

MINISTERS: assistance rendered by, in Ingersoll's propaganda, 540;

## MOTHER

good men with a defective philosophy, 349 ext.; know nothing of a hereafter, 377 ext.

MIRACLE: defined, 262 ext.; Myth and, 127.

MIRACLES: Ingersoll's arguments against, 262-63, 267-71; unthinkable, 263 ext.; what would constitute, 262-63 ext. *See also* Supernatural.

MIRROR, *Dramatic*, the, 132.

"MISSISSIPPI OF MELODY," the, 202.

MISTAKES OF MOSES, *Some*, 109, 291.

MONS, the death penalty an excuse for, 338 ext.

MODESTY OF INGERSOLL, 7.

MONEY: assertion, the, that Ingersoll cared nothing for, 451; how to spend, 392 ext.; Ingersoll's children taught not to care for, 431; Ingersoll's treatment of his family in matters of, 430-32.

MONOGAMY, Ingersoll the champion of, 384 *et seq.* *See also* Family, Ilone, Love, Marriage, Woman.

MONUMENTS TO INGERSOLL, subscriptions for, 491.

MORALISTS, dualistic, 344.

MORALITY: law and, were Ingersoll's teachings inimical to? Chap. xiii, 342-49; relations of happiness to, 347-48 ext.; the atonement the enemy of, 273; "the best thing to do," etc., 349 ext.

MORALS: absolute, the, in, 347; Christian, daily workings of, contrasted with those of infidelity, 349; dualistic doctrine, the, establishes a fiat in, 344; schools, two, of, 344; utilitarian, 348-49.

MORRISTOWN, N. J., trial of Charles B. Reynolds at, for blasphemy, 134-38.

MORTON, Oliver P., requests Ingersoll to nominate him for the presidency, 81.

MOSSES, *Some Mistakes of*, 109, 291.

MOTHER: bereaved, letter from a, 378 —letter to a, 377-78; Ingersoll the liberator of the, 389-93; Ingersoll's

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## MOTHER

see Ingersoll, Mary Livingston);  
 the holiest word is," 295 ext.  
 MOTHERS AND SOLDIERS OF THE REVOLU-  
 TION, tribute to, 83-84 ext.  
 MOZART, Wolfgang Amadeus, sonatas  
 194 ext.  
 MURDER TRIAL: Address to the Jury in  
 75; mentioned, 527.  
 MURDER, an alleged, acquitted  
 through Ingersoll's eloquence, 521-  
 2.  
 MUSIC: a strain of, "within some pal-  
 ace," of dreams, 465 ext.; a univer-  
 sal tongue, 201; association in,  
 18 ext.; "born of love," 191-92  
 ext.; effect of, on Ingersoll, 192-  
 3; effect of, on the poet, 193; ef-  
 fect of Wagner's, on Ingersoll,  
 192; "expresses thought without  
 language," 191 ext.; first impres-  
 sion of Wagner's, on Ingersoll, 198  
 ext.; great, "always and," 202 ext.;  
 Ingersoll's appreciation of, 191-94,  
 195, 197-206; Ingersoll's appreci-  
 ation of Wagner's, 198-206; Inger-  
 soll's belief that no greater than  
 Wagner's would be produced, 199;  
 Ingersoll's evolution in, 197-98;  
 Ingersoll's favorite, 202; Inger-  
 soll's sensitiveness to, 202-3; "of  
 the future," the, 200; of the organ,  
 described, 193; origin of, 191-92;  
 "the voice of love," 384 ext.  
 MUSICIANS: American Federation of,  
 letter of condolence from, to Mrs.  
 Ingersoll, 498-99; friendship of, for  
 Ingersoll, 193-94.  
 MURDER, every individual does as he,  
 19-29.  
 MY DAY AND GENERATION, extracts  
 from, 46-47, 48; Religion, quoted,  
 —read at Ingersoll's funeral,  
 52; *Reviews Reviewed*, 92.  
 MYSTICISM AND MIRACLE, 127.

## N

NEALSON, "Soliloquy" at the grave  
 comment on, 477-78; love and

## NYMPHS

sympathy disclosed in, 396-97;  
 mentioned, 75.  
 NATION, the: as Ingersoll would have  
 it, 506; duty of, to the citizen and  
 his state, 506-7.  
 NATURAL, the necessarily, 325.  
 NATURE: does she tire of uniformity?  
 129; forces of, immutable, etc., 249,  
 250-53; her carelessness of man,  
 250-53; human, Ingersoll's under-  
 standing of, 520; neither rejoices  
 nor regrets, 252; without design,  
 329.  
 NECESSARY, the naturally, 325.  
 NECESSITARIANISM, Ingersoll's belief  
 in, 324-29.  
 NECESSITY: doctrine of, epigrammatic  
 argument for the, 488 ext.; doc-  
 trine of, Ingersoll a believer in  
 the, 324-29; law of, 242; "mother  
 of the world," 243; universal and  
 omnipotent, 242-43.  
 "NEGATIVE" and "positive," in refor-  
 mative values, 307-8, 310-11.  
 NEGRO, the, Ingersoll's attitude to-  
 ward, 445-47.  
 NEW HAVEN Sunday Union, *The*. See  
 Union.  
 NEW YORK: *Christian Advocate* (See  
*Advocate*); *Evening Telegram*  
 (See *Telegram*); *Herald* (See *Her-  
 ald*); Ingersoll removes to, from  
 Washington, 127-28; *Observer* (See  
*Observer*); *Times*, *The* (See  
*Times*); *Tribune*, *The* (See *Trib-  
 une*).  
 NEWSPAPER-MEN, Ingersoll's relations  
 with, 444.  
 NIGHT AND MORNING: mentioned, 127;  
 quoted, 339-41.  
 NIGHTINGALE, Florence, 329.  
 NINETEENTH CENTURY CLUB, the, dis-  
 cussion before, 146.  
 NOBILITY, honor, glory, epigram on,  
 486 ext.  
 NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, *The*. See  
 Review.  
 NOVEL, the greatest in the world, 442  
 ext.  
 "NYMPHS OF THE DAY," the, 171 ext.

## O'BRIEN

## O

- O'BRIEN, —, lawyer, 44.  
 O'CONNELL, Daniel, compared with Ingersoll as an orator, 537 ext.  
 ONSERVER, New York, its attack on Paine, 93.  
 OBSTRUCTION, is "virtue's foil," etc., 479 ext.  
 OFFICE *per se*, not an honor, 70.  
 "OFT IN THE STILLY NIGHT," 32 ext.  
 OGLESBY, Richard J., appoints Ingersoll attorney-general, 63.  
 OHIO, Fifth regiment of, 58.  
 OPALS, letter acknowledging, 441.  
 ORATION: a printed, not an, 476; Centennial, Peoria, 83-84; Decoration Day, 1882, 117-19—extract from, 481; Decoration Day, 1888, 147.  
 ORATOR: anti-slavery, Ingersoll as an, 45-50; every excellence of the, possessed by Ingersoll, 513; "every variety of power" in Ingersoll as an, 537-38 ext.; forensic, Ingersoll's influence as a, 520-22 *et seq.*; Ingersoll "the horn," 475-76, 535 ext.—"the first in America," 107 ext.—"the foremost of America," 107 ext.—"the greatest," 47 ext., 48-49 ext.—"the greatest living," 93—"the inimitable American," 514-15 ext.—the most eloquent of the English tongue, 87-88—the peerless of all time, 1—was, first of all, an, 470-71; Ingersoll's fame as, the foundation of, laid, 511—services as, early demand for, 512; "of orators," Ingersoll the, 183 ext.; when Ingersoll's reputation as an, became national, 76-77. *See also* Eloquence, Expression, Orators, Oratory, Poet, Prose-poetry, Speaker, Style.  
 ORATORS: American and English, who never equaled Ingersoll, 48 ext., 537 ext.; Ingersoll "the greatest of living," 178—the "orator of," 183 ext.—the "prince of," 493 ext.; prose, the, of, 98.

## PARTY

- ORATORY: anti-slavery, of Ingersoll, 45-50, 48 ext.; can not be put on paper, 476; Ingersoll "the Shakespeare of," 538 ext.; Ingersoll's theory and practice of, 188, 189-90. *See also* Eloquence, Expression, Orator, Orators, Poet, Prose-poetry, Speaker, Style.  
 ORGAN, the music of the, described, 193.  
 ORTHODOXY, 127.  
 "OUR 'BON,'" Ingersoll called, 25.

## P

- PADDOCK, A. S., 106, n.  
 PAINÉ, Thomas: A *Vindication of*, 93; and the history of liberty, 73; defense of, Ingersoll's, 93, 368 n.; his "giving medicine to the dead," 101 ext.; iconoclast, 300; lecture on, Ingersoll's, 73; mentioned, 52, 54, 253; name of, Ingersoll's resolution to mention the, in every speech, 472; portrait of, medallion, concerning a, 174; power of his pen, the, passes to Ingersoll's tongue, 538 ext.; praised by Ingersoll in his first speech, 472.  
 PAINTINGS, Ingersoll's visit to a collection of, 526 n.  
 PALEY'S "WATCH," examined by Ingersoll, 248.  
 PALMER, —, letter to, 442.  
 —, John M., his candidacy, governorship of Illinois, 64 n.  
 PARENTS: attitude of, in educational matters, what it should be, 412-14. *See also* Children, Education.  
 PARIS MISSION APPOINTMENT, 94.  
 PARKER: Benjamin Weld, 51-54—tribute to, 76; Eva A., a Freethinker, 418—marriage of, 417-18—(*See also* Ingersoll, Eva A.); John, quoted, 52; Mrs. Benjamin Weld, 51-54, 421; Sarah Buckman, 52-53; Theodore, 52, 537 ext.  
 PARKERS, the, unorthodox, 52-54.  
 PARTY, political, Ingersoll not a slave of a, 509 ext.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## PAST

AST, present, and future, Ingersoll's vision of the, quoted, 339-41.  
 ATHOS: example of, 480; of human existence, 250.  
 PATRIARCHS AND BABES SLEEP SIDE BY SIDE," 116 ext.  
 PATRIOTISM, Ingersoll's, 508-11.  
 PEASANT, "I would rather have been a," 397 ext.  
 PEBBLES," polished in colleges, 484 ext.  
 PEKIN, Ill., Ingersoll delivers his first lecture at, 50.  
 PENITENTIARIES AND PRISONS, conduct of, 332-38.  
 PENOLOGY, Ingersoll's views of, 323, 332-38.  
 PERIA, Ill.: Ingersoll removes from, to Washington, 94-95; Ingersoll settles in, 42; Ingersoll's achievements in, summarized, 94-95; Ingersoll's life in, 42-95; Ingersoll's social and intellectual standing in, 94-95; memorial meetings in, on Ingersoll's death, 491-94; *Star*, *The* (See *Star*).  
 PERE LACHAISE, Ingersoll's colloquy with the superintendent of, about Comte, 75.  
 PERFECTIONISM," the craze of, 23 ext.  
 PERICLES, 473.  
 PERRY, Bliss, 165 n., 167 n.  
 PERSONALITY: an infinite, evidence of the existence of, 206; an infinite, inconceivable, 259-60 ext.; God as a, Ingersoll's argument against the conception of, 259-60.  
 PERSPICUITY, versus philosophic fame, 437.  
 PETITION TO ABOLISH SLAVERY, Ingersoll's mother prepares a, 14.  
 PHENOMENA; and existence, the perception of, all that can be known, 231-34; the things back of, unknown and inscrutable, 232-34.  
 PHIDIAS OF VERBAL SCULPTURE, Ingersoll the, 477.  
 PHILADELPHIA TIMES. See *Times*.

## POETRY

PHILANTHROPY, Ingersoll's, 450-51. See also *Charity*.  
 PHILIPPINES, acquisition of the, pleases Ingersoll, 507.  
 PHILLIPS, Wendell, compared with Ingersoll as an orator, 48 ext., 507.  
 PHILOSOPHERS, mentioned, in connection with the Agnostic principle and metaphysics, 230-31.  
 PHILOSOPHY: and philosophers, how valued, 416; Ingersoll's domestic, pecuniary features of, 430-32; of life, Ingersoll's, 158 ext., 295-96; of pure reason, Kant on the, 229 ext.; of *Style*, Spencer's, as a study in English, 478; "the highest," 220 ext.  
 PIGS, the impounding of some, and the result, 51-54.  
 PILGRIMAGE to the *Wise Men of the East*, *My*, extract from, 537-38.  
 PINCKNEY, —, lawyer, 44.  
 PITTSBURG LANDING, Ingersoll's regiment at, 56-57.  
 PITTSFORD, Vt., Ingersoll's father born at, 8—pastor at, 9.  
 PITY, mercy, and justice, in an Ingersollian allegory, 481 ext.  
 PLAGIARISM FROM INGERSOLL, 76 n.  
 PLATO, 353.  
 "PLUMED KNIGHT": "like a," 80 ext.; speech, mentioned, 184—quoted, 78-80. See also *Blaine*.  
 POE, Edgar Allan: his definition of poetry, 465; mentioned, 107.  
 POEM: Ingersoll concludes *The Devil* with a, 212-13; Ingersoll's last, extracts from, 213.  
 POEMS, recited by Ingersoll, from memory, 437-38.  
 POET: attributes of the, possessed by Ingersoll, 463-69; effect of music on the, 193; "Good Grey," the, 163, 166, 170; was Ingersoll a? 468.  
 POETRY: early, of Ingersoll, 30-31; familiarity with, Ingersoll's, 525; of Ingersoll's prose, the, a study of, 463-69; substance, or quality, versus literary form, in, 466-69;

## POETRY

- what is, and what is prose? 467-69;  
without rhythm, what it is, 468.
- POETS, Ingersoll's familiarity with the,  
30, 31, 32, 33, 37, 525.
- POLE, the North, our flag and, 507  
ext.
- POLITICIAN, Ingersoll not a, 509.
- POLITICS: Ingersoll changes his, 48-  
49; Ingersoll true to himself in,  
509-10, 512; Ingersoll's early inter-  
est in, 511; Ingersoll's judgment  
and services in, highly valued, 515;  
Ingersoll's life-work and influence  
in, summarized, 503-15; partici-  
pation in, by Ingersoll, 40, 44-49, 62,  
63-68, 76-83, 84-90, 92-95, 109-11,  
182-90, 503-15.
- POLYGAMY, 385-86, 394.
- POOR, the, kindness to, 449, 450.
- POPE: Alexander, 150, 151; General,  
106; the, and Bruno, 544; the,  
condemns modern thought and cul-  
ture, 288-89.
- PORTER, General, 118.
- PORTO RICO, acquisition of, pleases  
Ingersoll, 507.
- "POSITIVE" AND "NEGATIVE," in re-  
formative values, 307-8, 310-11.
- POSSIBLE, the, always happens, 327.
- POST-EXPRESS, *The*, Rochester, inter-  
view in, 215.
- PRAIRIES, *The*, extract from, 466-67.
- PRATT, E. H., 196.
- PRAY, "to plow is to," 92 ext.
- PRAYER, "the best" that Ingersoll ever  
read, 448.
- PREACHER, a, whom Ingersoll heard  
on everlasting punishment, when a  
boy, 366-69.
- PRECEPTS, philosophical, the valuation  
of, 415-16.
- PREJUDICE: absence of, in Ingersoll,  
445, 457; against Ingersoll, 493  
ext.—as a lawyer, 522—as a writer,  
481-82—religious, 481; theological,  
versus pity for Whitman, 166.
- PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SOUTH, the,  
declares slavery "divine," 287 n.
- PRESIDENT: "no man" of Ingersoll's  
ability "ever occupied" the office

## QUAKER

- of, 68 ext.; suppose Ingersoll had  
become, 69-73; the kind of, Inger-  
soll would have made, 72-73.
- PRIEST: "Keep your children away  
from the," 413-14 ext.; "parasite  
of woman," 383 ext.
- "PRINCE OF PARLIAMENTARIANS," etc.,  
80 ext.
- PRISONS AND PENITENTIARIES, the con-  
duct of, 332-38.
- PROCTOR, J. W., letter to, 439-40.
- PROFUNDITY, Ingersoll's, 539-40.
- PROGRESS, Ingersoll's first lecture, 50,  
214, 291, 529, 530.
- PROPAGANDA, Ingersoll's anti-theologi-  
cal: course and method of, 292-95;  
summary of the extent and influ-  
ence of, 528-45.
- PROPAGANDIST, rationalistic, Ingersoll  
not first generally known as a, 539.
- PROSE: assertion, the, that orators  
do not produce, 97-98; Ingersoll's  
comparison of Burns and Tenny-  
son a masterly piece of, 98; Inger-  
soll's future rank as a master of,  
463; what is, and what is poetry?  
467-69.
- PROSE-POETRY, Ingersoll's, a study of,  
463-69.
- PROVIDENCE, special, Ingersoll's view  
of, 247, 248.
- PULPIT, the, objects to works of gen-  
ius, 462.
- PUNISHMENT: capital, 337-38; cor-  
poral, of children, 402-4, 409, 410;  
everlasting, 364-79—analysis of the  
doctrine of, 365—Ingersoll's hatred  
of the doctrine of, 365-66, 368-70  
*et seq.*—Ingersoll's influence in de-  
stroying the belief in, 542-44—  
phases of the doctrine of, to which  
Ingersoll particularly objected, 371-  
75 (*See also* Hell); nothing re-  
formatory in, 410 ext.; of convicts,  
332-38.
- PURPLE, —, lawyer, 44.
- Q
- QUAKER WOMEN, effect of Ingersoll's  
eloquence on a group of, 88-89.



# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## RAMBAUT

### R

RAMBAUT, G. V., at the capture of Ingersoll, 61.

RAMDOLPH, Edmund, 538 ext.

RATIONALISM: status of, at the beginning of Ingersoll's crusade, 253-4, 289-90; summary of Ingersoll's life-work in, 528-45.

RATIONALIST," as applied to Ingersoll, 223-24.

REVEN, *The*, 107.

REVER, Ingersoll a constant, 437.

REWARDING, done by Ingersoll in boyhood and youth, 282. *See also* Literature.

REALITIES, objective, 232-34.

REBELLION, 'the mask of Democracy snatched from,' 80 ext.

RECIPROCITY: demand for, in the modification of opinions, 298-99; of Confucius, 454.

REFERENCES TO *The Works of Robert G. Ingersoll, Dresden Edition*, all in this volume are, 6 n.

REFORM: how can we, the world, 311 *et seq.*; *How To, Mankind*, a lecture, 182; Impossible without iconoclasm, 299; what each human being should do to bring about, 338-9 ext.

REFORMER: Ingersoll a constructive ethical, 306; Ingersoll 'the first great, of the age,' 498; Ingersoll the greatest of his day, 292; Ingersoll's courage, aggressiveness, honesty, etc., as a, 495-97. *See also* Iconoclasm, Iconoclast, Reforms, Reformers, the greatest, the greatest iconoclasts, 299-300.

REFORMS ADVOCATED BY INGERSOLL: churches, denominational, union, 314-15; crime and criminals, with reference to, 323, 330-38; educational, 318-22; homes, protection and increase of, 311-13, 331; what each human being should do pending the realization of the, 338-39 ext. *See also* Iconoclasm, Iconoclast, Reformer.

## REPORTERS

REGIMENT, Ingersoll's. *See* Cavalry, Illinois, the Eleventh.

REISSER's, Philadelphia, speech at, 165.

RELATIVITY: in morals, or ethics, 345, 346; in nature, 252.

RELIGION: a new, "sheds its glory on mankind," 340 ext.; "can never reform mankind," 214 ext.; Christian, *The*, in *The North American Review*, 112-13; Christian, the, nothing original in, 277-78; Ingersoll's last public utterance on, 214; Ingersoll's last sentence on, what it would have been, 215 ext.; "is slavery," 214 ext.; My, quoted, 301; My, read at Ingersoll's funeral, 220; negative, 307 ext.; of reason, the body, the home, usefulness, humanity, etc., 301-2 ext.; of the family, 387, 388; of this world, Secularism the, 309 ext.; past, present, and future, a vision of, 339-41; real, 214 ext., 339 ext.; supernatural, in decay, 542; the fountain-head of oppression, 284; the story of one, the story of all, 284; we, too, have our, 116 ext.; What *Is?* 214; what is better than, 214 ext.; why Ingersoll began his opposition to, 290-91. *See also* Christ, Christianity, Theology.

RELIGIONS: all based on falsehoods and mistakes, 215 ext.; common origin of, 284; Ingersoll studies, 284 *et seq.*

REMENYI, Edouard: and Ingersoll, 194, 195-97; dedicates his *Liberty* to Ingersoll, 195; his admiration and fondness for Ingersoll, 195-97; his designation of Ingersoll, 195; letters from, 195-97; mentioned, 500; playing of, described, 194-95; "The Ideal Dance" of, 194 ext.; visits Ingersoll at Cape Ann, 194 ext.

REPERTOIRE OF INGERSOLL, as a lecturer, 533.

REPORTERS, newspaper, Ingersoll's relations with, 444.

## REPUBLIC

- REPUBLIC: Ingersoll's appreciation of the American, 504-5; "Oh! I love the old," 507 ext.
- REPUBLICAN: Ingersoll becomes a, 49; national convention, 1876, 76; party, why Ingersoll classed himself in the, 183; state convention, Peoria, 1868, 63.
- RESOLUTIONS, memorial, on Ingersoll's death: Chicago, 494-97, 499; Indiana Afro-American conference, 498; Peoria, 67-68, 491-94. *See also* Ingersoll, Robert G., tribute to, by—.
- RESPONSIBILITY, moral, 324-29. *See also* Will.
- REST, "the windowless palace of," 481.
- RESURRECTION, the, Ingersoll on, 269-70.
- REUNION OF THE ELEVENTH ILLINOIS CAVALRY. *See* Cavalry.
- REVIEW, *The North American*: changes the title of Ingersoll's article, 112-13; Field-Gladstone-Manning-Ingersoll controversy in, 140-41; Ingersoll-Black controversy in, 111-13.
- REVIEWERS, *My, Reviewed*, 92.
- REVIVAL, religious, of 1857, 286-87, 288.
- REVIVALS, religious, after the Civil War, 288.
- REYNOLDS: Charles B., defended by Ingersoll, in a trial for blasphemy, 132-38, 527; William, telegraphed to, by clergymen, concerning Ingersoll's character, 92.
- RHETORIC, rejuvenated by Ingersoll, 463.
- RHODE ISLAND, humorous reference to the size of, 506 ext.
- RHYME, a hindrance to expression, 463.
- RHYTHM: a pronounced quality of Ingersoll's style, 463-69; apparent in all of Ingersoll's finer work, 468-69; iambic, in Ingersoll's productions, 464, 466, 479; the one

## SCALCHI

- indispensable element of poetic form, 468.
- RHYTHMS, prose, Ingersoll first to perfect those of English, 463.
- RICE, Allen Thorndike, 140.
- RIDDLE of the Universe, *The*, quoted, 524.
- RIDICULE: necessary in combatting dogma, 294 ext., 295; what did Ingersoll? 294-95.
- RIDICULOUS, can everything be? 293-94 ext.
- RIDPATH, John Clark, 220.
- RIGHT: absolute, 344-47; epigram on, 487; of eminent domain, invocation of, in favor of the home, 316.
- RIGHTS, state, Ingersoll's view of, 506.
- ROBERTSON, John P., Ingersoll's Sunday school teacher, 19, 26.
- ROBINS, Clinton J., letter to, 215.
- ROCHESTER *Post-Express, The*, interview in, 215.
- RON, the: a relic of barbarism, 410 ext.; spare, and spoil the child, 402.
- ROE, E. P., 138.
- ROGER'S HALL, Peoria, Ingersoll's declaration in, 178.
- ROUSSEAU, Jean Jacques, the *Confessions* of, 180.
- ROYER, "I want to be a free," 505.
- ROWLET, General, 64 n.
- RUDDER, WILLIAMS: Ingersoll in the, 215-16; mentioned, 527.
- "RUBBLE OF A WING," the, 105.

## S

- ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S DAY, 530.
- SABBATARIANISM, 394.
- SABBATHS, orthodox, of Ingersoll's boyhood, 100.
- SALAMIN, tribute of to Ingersoll, 501.
- SAND, a grain of, and the gods, 487 ext.
- SANDERS, Senator, 153.
- SAVED, *What Must We Do To Be* 111.
- SCALCHI, the voice of, 193.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## SCHOOL

**SCHOOL:** Ingersoll obliged to give up teaching, 35; Ingersoll teaches, 33-34; public, the, Ingersoll's views on, 318-22.

**OPENHAUER,** Arthur, his advice as to reading, 437.

**UBERT,** Franz Peter, the "Bar-  
"role" of, 194 ext.

**WATKA,** Frederick, discovers In-  
gersoll Islands, 125-26.

**WISCONSIN:** conclusions of, in nine  
words, 487; Ingersoll's handmaid,  
49; Ingersoll's knowledge of, 524-  
5; masters of, popularized by In-  
gersoll, 541; religion of, 339 ext.;  
what it has done and will do, 207.

**WITNESS:** Christian, mentioned,  
541; should revere Ingersoll, 541.

**WYATT,** —, Davis will case, 157 ext.

**WYATT, Dred,** Decision, denounced by  
Ingersoll, 510.

**WYATT FREE (PRESBYTERIAN) CHURCH,**  
New York City, 18.

**WYATT, amalgamation of,** proposed,  
4-15.

**WYATTISM:** the religion of this  
world, 309 ext.; what it embraces  
and teaches, 309 ext., 310-11. *See*  
*also* Free thought, Infidelity.

**WYATT, Anton:** and Ingersoll, 202-6;  
death of, Ingersoll's sorrow at the,  
3 ext., 204; Ingersoll's estimate  
of, 202, 204-5 ext.; mentioned, 500;  
telegram of condolence to,  
5; on Ingersoll's sensitiveness to  
music, 202-3; tribute to, quoted,  
4-5. *See also* Music.

**WYATT, an aged,** whose domestic  
affairs were changed by Ingersoll's  
presence, 432-33.

**WYATT, Ingersoll mentioned as**  
candidate for a, 94.

**WYATT LAKE,** 2.

**WYATT, may be symbols of objec-**  
tivity, 233.

**WYATT, a:** Christmas, 160-62; Free  
Baptist, on everlasting punish-  
ment, 366-69, 542; Thanksgiving,  
5; which "did some good," 368

## SISTERS

**SERMONS ON INGERSOLL,** at his death,  
490.

**SERVANTS:** devotion of Ingersoll's,  
424; management of, by Ingersoll,  
424.

**SERVETUS,** Michael, 285, 530.

**SHAKESPEARE,** William: "a heaven  
filled with constellations," 151 ext.;  
Baconian theory of, rejected, 153;  
birthplace of, 1, 2; compared with  
other writers, 151 ext.; first im-  
pression of, on Ingersoll, 37, 150-  
51; how Ingersoll accounted for,  
6 ext.; Iconoclast, 300; Ingersoll  
"greater than," 160; Ingersoll on  
the understanding and imagination  
of, 465-66; Ingersoll's "Bible,"  
422; Ingersoll's familiarity with,  
151 ext., 152, 525; Ingersoll's lec-  
ture on, 150-53, 174—a literary  
masterpiece, 130—and Spencer's  
*Philosophy of Style*, as studies in  
English, 478—repeated for the  
benefit of the Witter orphans, 159;  
Ingersoll's reluctance to attempt  
justice to, in one lecture, 152-53;  
"Intellectual ocean," an, 478 ext.;  
medallion portrait of, beside one of  
Ingersoll, 174; on "no darkness but  
ignorance," 66; plays of, immortal,  
198-99; quoted, 74, 125, 385, 409,  
448.

**SHARKEY, Sue:** mentioned, 421; pres-  
ent at Ingersoll's death, 218, 219 n.

**SHAWNEETOWN, Ill.:** court-house at,  
41; Ingersoll's life in, 39-42.

**SHAW'S GARDEN,** St. Louis, 56 n.

**SHELLEY, Percy Bysshe:** described,  
460; Ingersoll's tribute to, 465;  
mentioned, 69.

**SHERMAN, William Tecumseh,** 103 ext.

**SHILOH, Battle of,** Ingersoll in the,  
56-57.

**SHOEMAKER, the old Scotch,** who was  
reading Burns, 96 ext.

**SHURZ, Carl,** 118.

**SILVER CRAZE,** Ingersoll asked to  
"honor" the, 183 ext.

**"SISTERS OF THE NIGHT,"** 171 ext.

"SKEPTIC," as applied to Ingersoll, 223-24.

SLANDER, 'the tongue of, torn from the throat of treason,' 80 ext.

SLAVERY: declared "divine" by the church, 287; denounced by Ingersoll, 510; Ingersoll's mother prepares a petition to abolish, 14; opposed by Ingersoll, 45-50, 54, 510.

SLOO, James G., and Robert C., 39 n.

SMITH: Mr., 'if I rob, and God forgives me,' etc., 273 ext.; Orlando J., at Ingersoll's funeral, 220—letter to, 441-42; Socrates, one of Ingersoll's teachers, 30.

SMOKING, Ingersoll on, 441-42 ext.

SNOWS, "the infantry of the," 483 ext.

SOCIALISM, Ingersoll opposed to, 394, 538.

SOCRATES, 72, 525.

SOLDIERS: "I have one sentiment for," 481 ext.; their last resting-place, described, 481 ext.; of the Revolution, women, children and, tribute to, 83-84 ext.

"SOLILOQUY" AT NAPOLEON'S GRAVE, 75.

SOME: Mistakes of Moses, 109, 291; Reasons Why, 111; things "are immortal," 198-99 ext.

SOUR, better than creed, 423 ext.

SOUTH PLACE MAGAZINE, Dr. Conway in the, 68.

SPEAKER, "the most brilliant of the English tongue," Ingersoll introduced as, 50, 109-11. See also Eloquence, Expression, Orator, Orators, Oratory, Style.

SPEAKING, public, Ingersoll's theory and practice of, 188, 189-90.

SPEECH: Chicago and New York Gold, The, 183-90; last political, of Ingersoll, 185-90; nominating Blaine, 76-83 (See also Blaine); "Plumed Knight," 76-83 (See also Blaine).

SPEECHES, in the Garfield, Hayes, and McKinley campaigns. See Garfield, Hayes, McKinley.

SPENCER, Herbert: Autobiography of, 180; his *Philosophy of Style*, and Ingersoll's *Shakespeare*, studies in English, 478; Ingersoll's familiarity with, 525; mentioned, 253, 348.

SPIRIT: and matter, our ignorance as to, 355-56 ext.; without form, impossible to think of a personal God as a, 259 ext.

SPIRITUAL, what is it to be? 309-10, 339 ext.

"SPIRITUALISTS" AND "MATERIALISTS," words representing an unimportant distinction, 356 ext.

SURGEON, Charles Haddon, compared with Ingersoll as an orator, 537 ext.

STANTON, Elizabeth Cady, tribute of, to Ingersoll, 536-37.

STAR, *The*, Peoria, 437.

"STAR-ROUTE" CASE, the, 119-25; attitude of the newspapers toward, 122; costs of, 121; defendants in, 120, 121, 122 ext., 123, 125; first trial of, 121—closing address in the, 121, 123—verdict in the, 121; Ingersoll's fee in, 125; ingratitude of one of Ingersoll's clients in, 125; interview on, 122; intricacy and magnitude of, 120-21; letter in, reading, "Dear Colonel, I am a fool," 122 ext.; offense alleged in, 120; records in, 120-21; second trial of, 121, 122—a personal victory for Ingersoll, 123-24—addresses in the, 122, 123-24—verdict in the, 122-23; "star-routes," number of, 120; trials of, mentioned, 527.

STATESMAN, Ingersoll as a, 511.

STEVENSON, Adlai E., 106 n.

STORY-TELLER, Ingersoll as a, 37, 40.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON, 1, 2.

STYLE, literary and oratorical: charm of Ingersoll's, 463; comparison, a, of Ingersoll's with that of his contemporaries, 138-39; conciseness of Ingersoll's, 462, 485; ease of Ingersoll's, 463; likened to the fruit

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## STYLE

a tree, 459-60; **rhythm** a pronounced quality of Ingersoll's, 463-4; **splendor** of Ingersoll's, 463; **swiftness** of Ingersoll's, 460; **that** constitutes, 459. *See also* expression, Orator, Orators, Oratory, Poet, Prose, Prose-poetry, speaker.

Spencer's *Philosophy of*, and Ingersoll's *Shakespeare*, as studies in English, 478.

**STANCE**: an eternal, material, 2; and energy, eternity of, 258-9, 262—inseparable and eternal, 263; and force, Ingersoll did not try to distinguish, 351—scientifically or philosophically considered, 351—the all, 351; law of, 240; or matter, philosophically or scientifically considered, 232, 233, 234, 239-40. *See also* Energy, Force, Material.

**FRAG** *Address*, the, Washington, D. C.

**IDE** *A Sin, Is?* 175, 501-2 ext.

**LIVAN**, Jeremy C., 57.

**'not till the**, excludes you' (Whitman), 66; **shines** on coffins and cradles, 253 ext.; **"the rise and set of,"** 464 ext.

**DAY**: the early orthodox, 402, 407; **Unlon**, *The*, New Haven, 160.

**DAY-SCHOOL**, Ingersoll attends,

**DAY-SCHOOLS**, their teachings condemned, 413-14 ext.

**GOD**, Christ a, 266 ext.

**GODS**, 265-66.

**UNNATURAL**, the: aid from, man would cease to expect, 313 ext.; existence of, denied by Ingersoll, 351 ext.; Ingersoll's view of, 351, 355, 357 ext., 362.

**RESTITUTION**: foundation of, 206-7; Ingersoll's lecture on, 206-8, 210, 211, 212. *See also* Miracles.

**RESTITUTIONS OF MANKIND**, examined, 206-7.

## THINGS

**SUPPER AND TALK**, "after the," 168 ext.

**"SURVIVORS OF THE DEATH-FILLED DAYS,"** 179 ext.

**SWETT**, Leonard: entertained by the Parkers, 53; mentioned, 39 n.

**SWINBURNE**, Algernon Charles: mentioned, 194; tribute of, to Ingersoll, 501.

**SYMPATHY**, epigram on, 487.

**SYMPHONY**, John, 90 n.

## T

**TALMAGE**, T. De Witt, 117, 138.

**TAXATION**, exemption of the home from, 316.

**TAXES**, why collect, if the Government can make money? 188-89 ext.

**TELEGRAM**: **Evening**, the, New York, controversy in, 160-62; regretting inability to participate, Camden's compliment to Whitman, 165.

**TELEOLOGY**, 247, 249.

**TEMPERANCE**, defined, 483.

**TEMPEST**, *The*, quotation from, 74.

**TENNESSEE**, West, troops of, Second regiment, 58.

**TENNYSON**, Lord: compared with Burns, 97-98; mentioned, 227.

**'TESTIMONIAL TO WALT WHITMAN, A'** 167.

**THANET**, *Octave* (Alice French), 517.

**THANKSGIVING Sermon, A**, 191.

**THEATER**: Beckwith, Dowagiac, Mich., 173-74; Chatham Street, and Chapel, 18.

**THEISM**, untenable, 240.

**THEIST**, assertion of the, 233-34.

**THEOLOGY**: Ingersoll's manner of attacking, 292-95; 'of fifty years ago,' did Ingersoll attack the? Chap. xi, 256-78; rural, fifty years ago, 181; status of, when Ingersoll's first and last lectures were delivered, 542; why Ingersoll began opposition to, 290-91. *See also* Christ, Christianity, Religion.

**THINGS**: "In themselves," the, unknown and inscrutable, 234; three

## THINGS

- that Ingersoll declared immortal, 198-99 ext.
- THIS: "Is our country," 187 ext.; "was," "is," "shall be," quoted, 339-41.
- THOMAS, —, an insane man who regarded Ingersoll as his protector, 452.
- , Governor of Colorado, 497-98.
- THOMPSON, Joseph Ambrose, 443 n.
- THOMSON, William, 254.
- THOUGHT: and brain, relation of, 353-54, 355 ext. *et seq.*, 372 ext.; Ingersoll's belief that it had reached its limit in three departments, 199; origin of, 4; religious, at the beginning of Ingersoll's crusade, 253-54, 289-90, 542; the realm of, surveyed in *Superstition*, 206. *See also* Brain, Consciousness.
- THUMB, the, that "did all the sweating," 158 ext.
- TIMES, *The*: Chicago, interview with Ingersoll in, 531-32; Chicago, quoted, 77-78; Cincinnati *Daily*, 86; New York, 109 ext.; Philadelphia, 516 n.
- TOBACCO, Ingersoll on, 442 ext.
- TOLERATION, *The Limitations of*, 146.
- TONES, musical, suggest colors to Ingersoll, 201 ext.
- TORREY Township, Yates County, N. Y., Ingersoll born in, 1.
- TRAMPS (VAGRANTS), 323 ext.
- TRAUBEL, Horace L.: letter to, 167 n.; mentioned, 165 n.
- TREASON, the 'tongue of slander torn from the throat of,' 80 ext.
- TRIBUNE, *The*: Chicago, mentioned, 101—on Ingersoll's oratorical genius, 514-15—on Ingersoll's services, Hayes campaign, 85, 89-90; New York, on Ingersoll's speech, Cooper Union, Hayes campaign, 86-87.
- TRIBUTE to *Ebon C. Ingersoll, A.*, 104-5; read at Robert G. Ingersoll's funeral, 220-21.
- TRIBUTES TO INGERSOLL. *See* Ingersoll, Robert G., tribute to, by —. *See also* Eulogies.

## VICE

- TRINITY, Ingersoll's, 427.
- TRISTAN *und Isolde*, Ingersoll's favorite musical work, 202.
- TRUTH: can it be ridiculed? 293 ext.; defined, 280, 303; Ingersoll's attitude toward the, 302-4, 305; Seeker, *The*, 143 n., 442 n.; *The*, a lecture, 191, 303.
- TRUTHS, the fundamental, of Christianity. *See* Christianity.
- TWAIN, Mark: mentioned, 106, 500; tribute of, to Ingersoll, 434-35.
- TYNDALL, John: Ingersoll's familiarity with, 525; mentioned, 541; on heat, 254.
- TYRANNY, Ingersoll's hatred of, 389-90.

## U

- "UNBELIEVER," as applied to Ingersoll, 223-24.
- UNCONDITIONED, the, unknown and inscrutable, 234.
- UNFORTUNATE, the, Ingersoll's sympathy for, 324-25.
- UNION: Brooklyn, *The*, 127; Ingersoll's support of the, 510; Sunday, *The*, New Haven, 160; Union Veterans', Webb Command of, Peoria, 494.
- UNITARIANS, 264, 544.
- UNIVERSALISTS, 544.
- UNIVERSE, the: mechanical view of, adopted by Ingersoll, 241, 242; not created, 241-44; "ought to be a pure democracy," 390 ext.; planless and purposeless, 241-42.
- URN, the, containing the ashes of Ingersoll, 221-22.

## V

- VAGRANTS, "I sympathize with the," 323 ext.
- VERSE: blank, material for, in Ingersoll's productions, 464-66; written by Ingersoll in early life, 30-31.
- VEST, humorous letter acknowledging a present of a, 439-40.
- VICE: "lives before Love is born," 486 ext.; vicarious, impossible, 273 ext.

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## VILAS

—, 106.  
 VILAS, *of Thomas Paine, A*, 93.  
 VILAS, the music of the, 194-95, 201.  
 VILAS, Rudolph, his cellular pa-  
 nology, 253-54.  
 VILAS CITY, Nev., lecture at, by  
 Ingersoll, 536.  
 VILAS, vicarious, impossible, 273 ext.  
 VILAS, the, of Christ, can not be  
 transferred, 273 ext.  
 VILAS: of past, present, and future,  
 41; of *War, A* (See *War*).  
 VILAS: Ingersoll's, the compass of,  
 ext.; Scalchi's, a description  
 193.  
 VILAS: a minister becomes an-  
 ed at Ingersoll over, 455-56; al-  
 ed connection of a copy of,  
 Ingersoll's candidacy for the  
 ernorship, 456 n.; eulogized by  
 Ingersoll from a pulpit, 175; lec-  
 on, before the Chicago Press  
 h, 175; lectures on, two separ-  
 written by Ingersoll, 174-75;  
 dallon portrait of, concerning  
 174; mentioned, 253; reply of,  
 "What will you give in its  
 ce?" 301; the body of, upon the  
 ns of the Bastille, 175.  
 VILAS: "And now let us drink  
 the," 108-9 ext.; Eleventh Illi-  
 s Cavalry (See *Cavalry*).  
 VILAS, Daniel W., 106 n.  
 VILAS-WINNER, Ingersoll as a, 514-15.  
 VILAS-WINNER, Ingersoll as a, 514-15.

## W

WILSON, Richard; an iconoclast, 300;  
 dallon portrait of, concerning a,  
 ; mentioned, 195; music of, im-  
 mortal, 198-99 ext.—Ingersoll de-  
 scribes, 200-1—Ingersoll's apprecia-  
 a of, 198-206—its effect on In-  
 sersoll, 202—its first impression on  
 Ingersoll, 198 ext.; one of Inger-  
 s's gods, 198. See also *Music*.  
 WILSON, T. B., letter to, 149.  
 WILSON: Alfred Russell, 525; Lew,  
 STON," 217.

## WHAT

WANDERERS, "I sympathize with the,"  
 323 ext.  
 WANT, "where lipless famine mocked  
 at," 108 ext.  
 WAR: *A Vision of*, address contain-  
 ing, at Indianapolis, 87-88—closing  
 sentences of, quoted, 481—extracts  
 from, 55, 56, 481—pathos of, 395-  
 96; abolition of, 311-13, 331; Civil,  
 the, Ingersoll's service during, 54-  
 62; expenditures for, 312-13; moral  
 effect of, 312; *Thirty Years'*, the,  
 531; waste of, 312-13 ext.  
 'WARF AND WOOF, The': extract from,  
 464; mentioned, 127.  
 WARRIOR, "like an armed," 80 ext.  
 WASHINGTON: D. C., Ingersoll re-  
 moves from, to New York, 127-28—  
 Ingersoll removes to, from Peoria,  
 94-95—Ingersoll's home life in, 435-  
 36; George, we remember, 70.  
 WATSON, John (Ian Maclaren), helps  
 to right a literary wrong against  
 Ingersoll, 99.  
 WAY: Which, a lecture, 127; the  
 broad, "where science goes," 479  
 ext.  
 WEALTH, on retaining, where thou-  
 sands are starving, 449.  
 WEBB COMMAND, Union Veterans'  
 Union, Peoria, 494.  
 WEBSTER, Daniel: compared with In-  
 gersoll, 537 ext.; mentioned, 459.  
 WELD, Joseph, 52.  
 WENDLE, C. A., 495.  
 WESLEY, John, his idea of the treat-  
 ment of children, 403, 404.  
 WEST: Dresden, N. Y., 17; Tennessee  
 regiment, the Second, 58; "The  
 Wavy," 31 ext.  
 WESTERN: Hemisphere, Christ igno-  
 rant of the, 277; Union Telegraph  
 Company, Bankers' and Merchants'  
 Company against the, 527.  
 WESTMINSTER ABBEY, Ingersoll visits,  
 74.  
 WETMORE, Samuel W., 26-27.  
 WHAT: I Saw, and What I Did Not  
 See, in England, Ireland, and  
 France, 74; Ingersoll gave for

# ALPHABETICAL INDEX

## WHAT

- what he took away, 301-2 *et seq.*;  
*Is Religion?* 214; *Must We Do To  
 Be Saved?* 111.
- "WHENCE AND WHITHER?" 115-16.
- WHICH Way? 127.
- WHIG and Courier, *The*, 85-86.
- WHITE, Horace, 101-2.
- WHITMAN, Walt: a genuine American, 165; an iconoclast, 300; canonized by Ingersoll, 167-68; comment of, on Black's mistake in entering into controversy with Ingersoll, 113 n.; comment of, on the controversy between Ingersoll and Gladstone, 141-42 n.; comment of, on the discussion with Coudert and Woodford, 146-47 n.; death of 169; death of, described, 171; his admiration and love for Ingersoll, 163-64, 168; his "barbaric yap," 505 ext.; *His Life and Work*, by Bliss Perry, quoted, 165 n., 167 n.; his victory over the "granitic puddingheads," 165; Ingersoll's admiration and love for, 164-72; last meeting of, with Ingersoll, 168; medallion portrait of, concerning a, 174; mentioned, 134, 500; poet, the, of individuality, liberty, democracy, love, etc., 164, 170; quoted, 518-19; "Testimonials" to, 167—the use of a hall for the, refused Ingersoll, 166-67; *The Complete Writings of*, quoted, 165, 168; tribute to, by Ingersoll, 162-72—extracts from, 169-72—melody and sweetness of, 171; why Ingersoll admired and loved, 164; wish of, that Ingersoll speak at Whitman's funeral, 169; With, in Camden, quoted, 163.
- WHITTIER, John Greenleaf, 138.
- WIKY I Am An Agnostic, 180-81.
- WIFE: and mother, Ingersoll the liberator of the, 389-93; importance of loving your, 395 ext.; treat her as "a splendid flower," 393 ext. See also Home, Love, Marriage, Woman.

## WYETH

- "WILDERNESS OF FLOWERS," beneath a, 105.
- WILL, free, 324-29, 371.
- WILSON, —, 106.
- , Jere, 106 n.
- WING, "the rustle of a," 105 ext.
- WISCONSIN, the Milwaukee Evening, extract from, 535.
- WISDOM, defined, 487 ext.
- WIT, Ingersoll's: at the time of his capture by the Confederates, 61-62; in a colloquy with Judge Black, 111-12 n.; in the Davis will case, 156.
- WITTER, Aaron C., Ingersoll lectures for the children of, 159.
- WIVES: "and some are talking with," 56 ext.; pecuniary treatment of, 392-93.
- WOMAN: achievements of, 382; better than man, 382; education of, 382; equal of man, 382; freedom of, necessary, 383; Ingersoll the liberator and champion of, 380-83, 389-92 *et seq.*; Ingersollian ideal, the, of humanity and beauty, 383-84; love, marriage, home, and, chap. xv, 380-99; parasite of, 383; rights of, 382, 383; the, you love, "will never grow old," 397 ext. See also Wife.
- WOODFORD, Stewart L.: discussion with, 146; mentioned, 106.
- WOOLWORTH, Judge, Davis will case, 156.
- WORDSWORTH, William, 194.
- WORD-WIZARD, Ingersoll the, 463.
- WORLD: and the great, "sweeps on," 250 ext.; how can it be reformed? 311 *et seq.*
- "WORLD'S BRAIN PROGENITOR," Ingersoll the, 195.
- WORSNIP, defined, 395.
- WREATHS, "on the brows of the living," 166.
- WRITERS, individuality lacking in most, 460-61.
- WRONG, absolute, 344-47.
- WYETH, John Allan, quoted, 61 n.



## ALPHABETICAL INDEX

### WYLIE

WYLIE, Judge, his estimate of Ingersoll as a lawyer, 124 n.

### X

XOPMANES AND OTHER PHILOSOPHERS, mentioned in connection with the relations of the agnostic principle to metaphysics, 230-31.

### ZOROASTER

#### Y

YATES: County, N. Y., Ingersoll born in, 1; Richard, commissions Ingersoll colonel, 55.

#### Z

ZOROASTER, Apollo, Baldur, Chrishna, and other sun-gods, in connection with the origin of Christ, 265-66.